DEADMAN'S BAY

LEONARD A. KNIGHT

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Colonel Warren, a secret service agent, joins forces with a local poacher in an attempt to bring to justice the mysterious Mr. Antrobus. He is ostensibly a producer, making a film in the rocky and wild setting of Pembrokeshire, but in actual fact the film is a cover for the more profitable activity of landing smuggled drugs in the lonely, bleak bays of this part of the coast. It is an exciting story, and as the net slowly draws round Mr. Antrobus it reaches a fine climax. But this is no ordinary thriller. The characterisation and the style in which it is written give it what the *Times Literary Supplement* has called "a subtle literary quality" as well.

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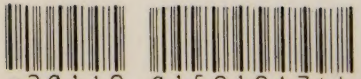

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DEADMAN'S BAY

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DEADMAN'S BAY

LEONARD A. KNIGHT

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DEADMAN'S BAY

CHAPTER I

Prologue

WHICH TELLS HOW A MAN CAME OUT OF THE SEA

In the county of Pembroke, that delectable piece of land known as "Little England Beyond Wales", there is, and has been from time immemorial, an unusually large percentage of gipsies. They rove the hills in twos and threes, in large caravans, in families, in tribes, and solitarily, lone, like an old lone wolf.

Jerry Scant was one of the solitary ones, an outlier from the tribe. Jerry was known to the inhabitants of all the towns and villages, and to most of the magistrates. He was, not to put too fine a point on it, jack of all trades, legal and illegal, and master of them all. He could grind scissors, clip a horse or steal one with equal facility. He could fish, mend a net, poach a salmon, and smuggle whisky with equal adroitness. He could tend a garden, steal a spade and sell it back to the owner, complete with new handle with delightful ease. He never had any money, but always sufficient to purchase a little beer, much tobacco, a pocket full of sweets for playing children, good strong boots and a flask of rum.

He lived at various addresses, ranging through a wide selection from Haroldlip Priory (in ruins) to Farmer Jones' hayloft, and occasionally the County Jail. But he preferred the open. Sometimes he appeared with a pony and a light, long, narrow cart. None knew from whence he obtained them. None knew where they disappeared. When equipped with these you would see Jerry at night time turn off into some shady narrow lane, bordered with a strip of green grass and overhung with trees. At a convenient spot he would halt his equipage, erect a small triangular tent made of one sheet of canvas and three sticks, get out pots and pans and cook himself a *poulet en casserole, pommes de terre,* and top off with the finest peaches grown at Bamfield Court. A passer-by just before darkness set in would see Jerry's feet sticking out from one end of the tent, and a volume of blue tobacco smoke pouring out from the other. At one period of the night, however, the tent would have no occupant. No one ever saw him leave. No one ever saw him come back.

Such was Jerry Scant. Scant of words, hence his name. Jerry Scant. Artful Jerry Scant. Clever Jerry Scant. A rogue, but a delightful one who could rob you with a smile. The whole world was his oyster, but he never went back on a friend. Jerry Scant, Rogue, and Nature's gentleman.

. . . . .

To-night Jerry Scant stood on the edge of the sea gazing at something dark which moved uncertainly

in the path of the moon. Jerry's legs were placed wide apart, his hands were in his pockets, and he chewed a piece of straw.

"Perishing funny!" he soliloquised. "Damned perishing funny! Head of a seal or a man?" Jerry's brown eyes, the hard brown eyes of a hunter, became alert, and the straw in his mouth was still. The dark blob veered and seemed to be going out to sea but turned again and made direct for land, but uncertainly, so very uncertainly.

"Blast my pony's withers! It's a man!" Nearer and nearer came the blob, and presently Jerry's quick ears caught the sound of laboured breathing.

"Bet 'e goes down," hazarded Jerry, to himself. "Flask of rum to a blackberry 'e goes down."

A cloud swept across the moon and Jerry's eyes strained through the darkness.

"Bet 'e's gone. Flask of rum to a pebble e's gone." The straw in his mouth jerked down and up, wavered and then stood up straight as the moon shone out again and revealed the swimmer close in to shore. In a little while the swimmer clambered out and collapsed on the beach.

"Queer! Damned queer!" soliloquised Jerry. He stepped out of the shadow of the rock under which he had been standing, and then received the shock of his life, for the inert heap on the sand gathered itself together and sprang like a wild cat straight at Jerry's throat.

They went down together in a snarling heap, but Jerry was uppermost. Artful Jerry Scant was upper-

most and deep down in his throat he laughed. A fight was the joy of his life.

"Easy, pard! Easy now! Wait till you're fit and I'll break your darn neck before breakfast!"

Under a scientific hold, the body underneath became still, and a weak voice raised itself querulously. "Who are you—friend or foe?"

"Scatty," ejaculated Jerry. "Bats in the belfry! Better put him back in the sea."

"Who the devil are you?" came the voice, this time stronger.

"Give you a flask o' rum. Hold still, will you!"

Without more ado Jerry, sitting astride the recumbent form, unscrewed the stopper of his rum flask and forced the whole lot down a protesting throat. The body underneath sprang and twisted like a bucking broncho and Jerry laughed.

"That's put some pep in you."

"Who the devil are you?" spluttered an angry voice.

"Jerry Scant. Who are you?"

The man on the ground began to laugh hysterically. "I—I—I rather think I'm Neptune. Father Neptune!"

Jerry pursed his lips in a soundless whistle. "Blimey! He ain't half off it."

The moon clouded over again and Jerry caught the sound of men's voices. The stranger had evidently caught them, also, for he ceased his inane laughter and lay tense.

"Friend," he said, "those men are after me. Will you help me?"

Nothing he could have said could have won him the allegiance of Jerry Scant quicker than that.

"Pard," he said, "you and me's pals. And there ain't a man breathin' can follow Jerry Scant in Pembrokeshire." With a quick lithe movement he was on his feet. "Can you run?" he asked softly.

"No. I'm whacked!"

Bending down, Jerry gathered the limp form in his arms as easily as a mother picks up a child. Then, so quickly did he move that, flitting between the boulders and moving on the soft sand, he was out of sight before the men came to the edge of the cliff above. Darkly they loomed against the skyline, like gigantic birds of prey.

"Shall we go down?" asked one.

"No," said the other. "This is most likely where he will be washed up, but I want someone outside of us to find him. The shore current swings straight in here off the point. But then, of course, he may get into one of the others and be carried out."

"Think he will drown?"

"My dear sir," the voice was lazily insolent, "by now he is as full of sea water as an egg is of meat."

From under a thick bush in a coombe not thirty yards away came a whisper as gentle as a breeze.

"'E's a flamin' liar, pard, ain't 'e?"

A sickle moon shone whitely overhead, and a slight ground mist began to creep around. Far back on

the mountains a curlew whistled weirdly. Underneath, the sea rolled with a noise like the wind through aspens. The short man standing at the edge of the cliff shivered, and the tall one laughed sharply, like the bark of a fox. "Bah! I believe you are downright frightened. Is it the darkness?"

The short man turned his slightly almond-shaped eyes up at the other and a rictus was visible on his face.

"No," he said pointedly, "it is not the darkness."

Came again the short, hard laugh, and a bush in the coombe trembled ever so slightly. For a few moments the men at the edge of the cliff lingered staring seawards, then they turned inland, and their voices became fainter in the distance.

For the space of five minutes everything was still. Then a rabbit popped out of a hole inquiringly, only to dart back into the earth again as a certain bush shook softly. Emerged a head, ever so slowly, which turned itself slowly from left to right and sniffed the air like a dog. Satisfied that all was well, a pair of powerful shoulders followed, and Jerry was in the open, motionless, silent, still as a tree. He stood thus for a while then, bending down, he swiftly parted the bushes and assisted a long white form to a vertical position. The light of the moon showed a tall white-skinned man who coolly inspected a long, deep-pocketed jacket before slipping it on. This strangely assorted pair silently picked their way up the coombe, keeping always in the shadow, and moving as warily as stags. For a mile or so they proceeded without sound, Jerry

occasionally giving his strange companion a supporting arm. A narrow, deep-rutted cart track opened in front of them, along which Jerry propelled his friend until they arrived at a semi-circular patch of grass on which stood a pony and a long narrow cart. Parting some gorse bushes at one end, a small triangular tent was discovered, and beside it the dying embers of a fire. Kicking some wood on it Jerry soon had a warm, comforting blaze, over which a pot presently began to simmer aromatically.

A tinge of colour began to show itself in the pallid cheeks of the tall stranger, now clad in an overcoat, blanket and socks.

A meal was eaten by the pair in silence, followed by copious libations of scalding hot, strong, black tea out of a black tin.

Then Jerry Scant spoke, jerking his thumb in the direction of the tent. "Sleep pard," and there was a look in his eyes that brooked no argument. So a stranger slept in Jerry's tent that night, and Jerry curled up in front of it, like a huge mastiff, and slept with one eye open.

Dawn broke cold, with a freshening, gusty wind, and Jerry was astir soon afterwards, cooking breakfast.

A prodigious yawn came from inside the tent, and Jerry's face broke into a twisted smile.

"Stretchin' himself like a hound," he said, "and ought to be dead. Damn him! He wellnigh busted me windpipe and 'e's swallowed me flask of rum."

"What's that?" asked a pleasant voice, and a head emerged from the tent.

Jerry looked around truculently. "Hullo!" he growled, but meeting a humorous but singularly penetrating pair of grey eyes, he smiled.

"Wellnigh busted me windpipe, ye did, with your great strong fingers. And ye ought to be a deader, ye know that don't ye?"

The stranger laughed, and Jerry looked at him quizzically.

"That's a sight better laugh than the one ye gave last night, pard. 'Pon me sowl I thought ye were off your nob. And ye told me you were Father Neptune."

"I felt rather like him. I had not long come up from the bottom of the sea."

Jerry stopped cooking the breakfast and crossed over to the tent. "Now that's quite enough of that gammon. If we are to be pards I want your name."

The stranger emerged from the tent and stood up smiling until he looked with level eyes into the suspicious ones of Jerry Scant.

"Do you really want my name, Jerry?" he asked.

"I gave ye mine," replied Jerry doggedly.

The tall stranger seemed to make up his mind suddenly. "Very well, I will tell you all. As we breakfast I will tell you how I came to be in the sea."

"Everything?" asked Jerry.

"Yes. Everything," replied the stranger.

"Then we are pards, sir," said Jerry, holding out his hand.

They gripped hands strongly.

The twain sat down to breakfast under a sky flushing red in the east. The whinchats awoke and bounced over the gorse-bushes, and in the distance a farm dog barked. But in spite of the brightness of the morning the tall stranger often shivered, and Jerry Scant watched him anxiously, as a mother watches a sick child.

For the stranger had been nigh unto death and was still fey.

CHAPTER II

Colonel Warren's Narrative

tells of a letter and the consequences

It was with considerable annoyance that I sat down at my desk and penned a letter to my friend Sir Arnold Withers, of the C.I.D. A surfeit of adventures during the war, when I had served under him in the Intelligence Branch, and a hectic year of hide and seek played with the inscrutable and fanatical Chinese, had made me look upon his rare letters as birds of ill omen.

Here, at my Sussex home, I was enjoying the life of a country gentleman, and, truth to tell, was very annoyed that the tenor of this life should be broken into, even by so close and distinguished a friend as Sir Arnold. The clicking of a mower came to me through the open French windows, and the soft jingling of harness mingled with the broad Sussex of the farmhand, very pleasant and English to the ear.

"Curse the letter! Why should I trouble about it? I had surely earned my little piece of England already."

Thus grumbling I looked at it again, trying to read between the lines whither it would lead me, and how long I should be away.

The letter, which was a personal one, read as follows:

"My dear Bill,

"Believe me, I am extremely sorry to have to break in on your tranquil and undoubtedly very enviable mode of existence, but something is happening which needs the perspicuity of a Warren (shameless flatterer, thought I) to unravel.

"Quite candidly, old chap, it is not the sort of job which can be tackled through the usual channels. It necessitates the services of someone outside of *us*, you understand, and although you will curse me up in heaps (he was quite right) do say you will help me.

"I feel pretty sure that my own movements are being very closely watched by our interesting friends, so that I cannot come down to see you, and it is advisable that you should not call upon me. Write and let me know whether you will once again help your old friend and I will send a trustworthy, but as yet unknown, recruit along to you who will make you *au fait* with the job. If you could arrange to have a tennis party over the week-end he will join you. Don't go outside of your drive gates with him, however, and lie low for a couple of days after he has gone. His name is Archie Wemyss.

"How is the farm progressing? Now is the time to cut your grass. It will rain hard for the remainder of the summer.

"Ever Yours,

"ARNOLD WITHERS."

"Confound him," I said again, "why couldn't he leave me to my farm if he feels so solicitous over it."

Then I thought of the dear old boy as I had seen him when up against the big things during the war, and I smiled at his photograph on the mantelpiece. "All right, old sahib," I said, "I'll be with you, willingly."

I strolled down to the village and posted the letter myself and on the way back made up my mind whom I should invite for week-end tennis.

The week-end came fine and hot. Glorious tennis weather, and I almost forgot the main reason why so many be-flannelled guests were present on my lawns.

But a pleasing but strange voice at my side brought me up on a short rein.

"Colonel Warren!"

I turned and beheld a slim, but wiry-looking youth, with a pleasant, freckled face and astonishingly innocent blue eyes.

I suppose I must have shown some surprise, for he smiled broadly.

"Grown a bit since you saw me last, sir."

I held out my hand. "Why—er—yes. To be sure! Archie Wemyss. Come along. I'll introduce you to some partners!"

His smile grew even broader. "I take it that you are fixed up yourself, sir."

"No," I replied. "I'm not," and was astonished to find that one of the blue eyes was covered by a most expressive eye-lid. I did some rapid thinking. This innocent-looking youth certainly kept his attention on the business in hand in a most tactful manner.

"Oh, yes," I laughed. "I'm fixed up for this set, but I'll join you in the next." The eyelid fluttered gently, and the blue eyes turned casually to inspect the crowd. Watching closely, I saw his casual glance sweep over each one of my guests whilst he chattered to me incessantly of the Test Matches, the heavy-weight championship, the weather, Tom Webster's cartoons and the problem of emigration.

We had a rattling good afternoon's tennis, at which game young Archie Wemyss excelled. After the other guests had driven off he and I went in to dinner.

To be quite frank I was a little ruffled at the extreme youth of Sir Arnold's emissary. If the job was as difficult and dangerous as he had intimated why had he not sent down one of his best men. Old Buck Nettlefold for instance, that one-eyed bag of mystery who knew the crooks in every country under the sun. Or Sandy Maitland, that cold austere chunk of humanity from over the border, who concealed under a frigid exterior the guile of a Chinaman. I looked askance at my young guest, and began to think that Sir Arnold was calling me in for a second-rate sort of job which could be managed by office boys. But next instant I nearly dropped my knife and fork. Archie Wemyss had put his head on the table and was asleep.

"Good God! What is the matter?"

At the sound of my voice he started wildly up and glared around like an animal at bay, then seeing me, smiled.

"Sorry, sir," he apologised. "I haven't had any sleep for three nights."

I rose from the table and went around to him. "Well, you are going to have some now young man," I said. "We cannot discuss anything whilst you are in your state. So it is bed for you, my lad, at once."

He tried to protest, but I was obdurate. As he left he gave me one of his shy smiles.

"I know what the Chief meant now," he said.

"What?" I asked.

"He told me to write and tell him whether I liked Drake."

I passed a restless sort of night myself. The sight of my young guest's exhaustion warned me that there were stern days ahead. I did not know whether I was glad or sorry now that the call had come. There is a certain allurement about our sort of work. It captures the imagination, and calls for the very best qualities in a man. It was always dangerous work, sometimes deadly monotonous—but always dangerous.

Next morning young Wemyss was full of vitality. He wanted to rush at the job right away, but I stayed him until we had eaten a good breakfast.

I then rang the bell for Jackson, my stolid-faced butler, and told him that we did not want to be disturbed. He smiled lugubriously and withdrew.

"Mournful sort of cove, sir, isn't he?" inquired Archie.

I chuckled. "Jackson was my batman during the war," I told him. "He has been with me on every job I have undertaken for the Service."

"Is he——"

"One of us." I nodded.

Archie then opened out with a burst like machine gun fire.

"Look here, sir," he said. "We are up against an international gang of smugglers. The Chief says it is the biggest thing outside of war that he has ever encountered."

"Smugglers?" I lifted an eyebrow.

"Yes. Cocaine!"

I gasped. "Good Lord!" For the moment I had nothing more to say.

Archie was now right on the job. Gone was his inane little smile, gone the languor and flippancy, and in their place was alertness, decision and—how shall I express it—concentration.

"An international gang, sir. Ramifications in every country in the world. The stuff has been simply pouring in. There are other things besides; diamonds from the new Namaqualand fields, silks, and dangerous drugs, but it is the cocaine that is worrying us. The gang is a big one with a first-class brain at the top. Up till now they have had us watched all along the line. They have forestalled every move the Chief has made. They know most of our big men. That is why the Chief sent me along. I am a beginner, and unknown as yet. They would scarcely imagine that the Chief would entrust such work to me."

I smiled. I did not know which to admire most, the absolute candour of the youth in front of me, or the guile of Sir Arnold Withers. I knew now why he had chosen so young a messenger.

"Are you listening, sir?" asked Archie.

"Go ahead," I replied.

"They have some way of getting hold of inside information. The Chief thinks that their top dog is someone who has access to the leading men in the country. It's simply damnable! It has made us suspect all sorts of innocent parties. And they are killers!"

"Oh!" I ejaculated, watching my young enthusiast.

"And they wrecked Major Nettlefold's car in Scotland two nights ago."

"Ah."

"I suppose you are thinking that they are operating in Scotland, sir?" hazarded Archie.

"Dunno," I replied.

Archie was a trifle nonplussed at this, but the fact of the matter was that I wanted the complete story in his own way without adding to it by argument or suggestion.

"Well, they are not in Scotland," he continued triumphantly. "I'm going to tell you where they are presently."

"Ah."

"Now this is where you come in, sir. We have a little clue for you to follow up. Your job is to get the leader."

"Hum!" I puffed out another cloud of smoke.

"You see, sir, we cannot bring the police into this, admirable as they are on all occasions. This gang would get to know almost before we made the move if we tried it on. Then, long before we could get there, our birds would have flown. Oh, there are

big men engaged on this job, Colonel, and there is a master brain at the top. That's the fellow you are to get."

"Oh!"

"Yes, and in spite of your having already been successfully matched against some of the keenest secret service men in the world, the Chief is of the opinion that this is as big a job as you have ever tackled. They are killers, don't forget. So don't go in with your eyes shut."

"Hum! Bad as that, Archie?"

He dived a hand into his pocket and brought out a cigarette case. Extracting one, he broke it across, and a white powder poured out, for all the world like castor sugar.

"That's the stuff they'll shoot for!"

I sat staring at the sinister little heap as if mesmerised. I caught myself shrinking from it as from a leprous spot. Cocaine! The full hideousness of the traffic suddenly surged up in my brain and I was nauseated. Cocaine! A vile drug pouring into this England to undermine the health and reason of it's victims. A dull rage burnt at the back of my brain. If I had felt any reluctance to taking up the job it had now disappeared. Already I felt myself at grips with the man who was engineering this vile traffic.

When I spoke my voice sounded curiously strained. "How long has this been going on?"

"We don't know, sir," answered Archie. "But it is about two months since we discovered that it is coming through in bulk."

"How do you know that?"

"It cannot come through in such quantity through the usual channels. Of course, cocaine smuggling is always going on. Same as opium. Sailors get it through in small packets. Chiefly aliens. But they are constantly being found out, and the penalties are heavy. But the stuff pays so well that there is always someone ready to dirty his soul by handling the stuff."

"Then it does not come through made up like that?" I nodded towards the open cigarette case.

"Good Lord, no! This is only one of the means of distribution. We have caught some of the aliens who distribute it. But they know nothing."

I raised my eyebrows.

"No, sir. They do not know how it gets in. They are merely tools. The big men are on the smuggling side of the business. Excuse me a moment, sir. I'll show you something else."

He went out to the hall and returned with a walking stick, a malacca cane with a gold knob.

"An old trick, sir." He turned the ferrule, and held out a hand in which reposed two white pellets. "A tall, dark chap left this at the Embassy. He did not return to claim it, and he has not been seen since. We think he may be one of the gang."

"Great Scott!"

I began to realise that the job was going to be a big one. At first I had been rather sceptical. It sounded more like a job for the Excise. But, as Archie proceeded with his story, I could see that the smuggling

was carried out on a tremendous scale, and in quite a different way to the usual "chance your arm" seaman. Archie's next words confirmed this.

"We have had the ports watched for over a month, sir. Not that the Customs need any strengthening. They are a mighty efficient service."

"Just a moment, Archie," I said. "I thought I had been told that it was not the job that your service could tackle."

He bit his lip nervously before replying.

"Point to you, sir," he replied. "What I ought to have told you is that we are trying to trace them by our bull-at-a-gate method, which, of course, is watched by our friends with delighted contempt. It is our new move which must be handled so carefully."

I nodded thoughtfully. This seemed pretty sound. Archie was looking at me critically, and I suddenly realised he was going to make a further and important disclosure.

"Then you have something—er—definite to go on?" I asked.

"It depends, sir," he answered, "on what we can make of it." He took out his note-case and from it withdrew an envelope. "At one of the places we raided last week I picked a piece of charred paper out of a grate. I have it here, sir. The rest of the letter had been burnt, along with other papers."

Opening the envelope, he drew from it a small scrap of paper which he handed me without a word. I took it, and saw that it was evidently the top left-hand corner of a letter that had been torn into small

shreds. It had two straight edges, top and left-hand side, and contained six words

the Twrch Trwyth
he will
July.

I turned it over, but there was nothing on the back.

"That's the piece of information, sir, that has caused me loss of beauty sleep."

"Hum!"

Archie grinned maliciously. "What do you think of it, sir?"

"Dunno!"

Archie's blue eyes had suddenly become grave, and his voice intense.

"Do you happen to know anything about Welsh folk-lore, sir?"

"A little. Why?"

"Ever heard of a book called *The Mabinogion?*"

"Yes. I have it somewhere."

"Good. Then you will know that it contains certain tales taken from the *Red Book of Hergest*, a fourteenth century MS. in the possession of Jesus College, Oxford."

"Correct," said I, "but what has that to do with cocaine?"

"Nothing, except that one of our smuggling friends has a copy of the *Mabinogion*, that, knowing this, we know beyond all doubt he belongs to the educated class of criminal, and that he uses certain phrases of the book as keywords and cyphers."

"Hum! And what did the chief say when you told him that?"

Archie flushed. "Reminded me there was a wide gulf between fact and hypothesis."

"Ah! And what did you do?"

"Went out and bought a copy of the book, and studied the movements of the Twrch Trwyth, which I discovered was a legendary sort of beast which the old knights hunted all over Wales and the West of England."

"Good man," said I. "You are thorough."

Archie flushed at the compliment, and returned to the attack.

"I found one rather interesting passage in the notes. Of course it may be nothing, sir," he continued diffidently, "but I could not help being struck with the idea." His voice rose exultantly. "I believe I know where they land the stuff. Just wait a moment, sir, I'll fetch the book along."

"No need," I replied. "Sit still." I touched the bell and Jackson came along.

"Oh, Jackson," I said, "fetch me the *Mabinogion*."

He twitched one eyebrow but stood still. He looked lugubriously at Archie and back at me, then coughed deferentially.

"Beg pardon, sir."

"A book, Jackson," I explained. "Perhaps you thought it was a cocktail?"

His severe mouth fluttered gently at one corner, and he disappeared.

Archie laughed for the first time during the morning.

"I like that chappie, sir. Useful man in a tight corner by the look of him."

"Very," I answered. But my thoughts were plunging ahead. I was wondering whether Jackson and I would be in a tight corner with this cocaine gang.

Jackson returned bringing the book. There was, I noticed, a peculiar gleam in his eye.

"Well?" I asked.

"What a jool of a name for a cocktail, sir! A positive jool, sir! Fancy a Mabinogion with a soup-song of brandy in it!"

Archie spluttered, and Jackson's gaze seemed to take him in for the first time, a lugubrious surprised sort of stare that made Archie rock in his chair, whilst he grew purple trying to suppress a laugh.

"Jackson."

"Sir."

"You will be seeing a good bit of Mr. Wemyss for a while."

"Sir."

"He is in the 'game'."

Jackson's hauteur dropped like a cloak, and the stony face broke into a sudden and astonishingly winning smile.

"Honoured to meet you, sir," he said.

Archie's laughter had disappeared as suddenly as it had arisen, and he was regarding Jackson with swift, appraising eyes.

"You have had experience of the 'game,' Jackson?"

"Six years, sir."

Archie glanced at me and I nodded.

"War and China." I said laconically.

"Then I suppose you will be in this, Jackson?" said Archie.

Jackson nodded. "Wherever the guv'nor goes, I goes. If 'e dies, I dies, but somebody else dies first, d'ye get me, sir?" The lugubrious look became more pronounced, and Jackson was back in his shell. He turned to me. "Nothing else you are wanting, sir?"

"No, thank you, Jackson."

"Very good, sir. The maps is in the drawer behind you, sir, if you want them."

"Maps!" ejaculated Archie.

"Yes, sir," said Jackson. "The hordinance maps, sir. Cornwall and Wales on the right 'and side, sir." He bowed and was gone, leaving Archie with open mouth and goggling blue eyes.

I smiled at him reassuringly, but all he could do was gasp. "Gee whizz! And I thought him half dead. Do you know, Colonel, I really begin to feel sorry for the cocaine smugglers. He seems so, what shall I say, damnably and deadly efficient."

"Hum! Now let's have a look at the *Mabinogion*."

"Excuse me, sir," said Archie, reaching the book, "I'll turn up the page in the notes which I found the other night."

He rapidly scanned the pages, and having found what he wanted, handed it me. Under the heading "Porth Cleis" I read the following:

> "This place at which Twrch Trwyth landed, and commenced his devastating expedition through the Principality, is a small but well known harbour in Pembrokeshire, at the estuary of the river Alun. Although it is only capable of affording accommodation to small craft, it was, in times past, a much-frequented port, and was the landing-place in several marauding excursions of the Gwyddyl Ffichti, one of whom, named Boia, is recorded in the *Liber Landavensis* as having been the source of great annoyance to St. David and St. Telliaw."

I raised my head and looked at Archie.

"Your industry does you credit, my friend. I firmly believe you have picked up the trail."

Archie flushed with pleasure, and his mouth stretched from ear to ear. "Thank you, sir," he said.

"Now for the maps, Archie," I said.

Going to the bureau, I selected a small scale one of the British Isles and a couple of one-inch Ordnance maps of the county of Pembroke. Spreading them out on the table, we conned over them for a while silently.

"Seems a pretty bit of coastline, sir," said Archie presently.

"M'yes," I replied. "Have you located that harbour?"

"I've picked out Porth Cleis, sir, but I must say it does not appear to be much of a harbour. Looks more like a creek to my way of thinking."

"There is only one thing for it," said I, speaking half to myself. "Investigation on the spot. I think I will take a walking tour. I have never been to St. David's. It is rather unique I have heard. Let me see, isn't there an old doggerel about two pilgrimages to St. David's equalling one to Rome?"

CHAPTER III

WHICH TELLS OF MANY THINGS, BUT CHIEFLY OF BULL HOLE

So that was why I now sat at the foot of the cliffs at Denby staring across the bay to where the coast ran westward into a steely sea.

The evidence was slim enough God wot, but I had known of more slender threads during my work in China. Long experience had taught me that in this "game" one dare not neglect the trivial.

I pulled the piece of paper out of my pocket and studied it again, although perfectly familiar with the meagre contents. . . .

the Twrch Trwyth
he will
July.

Prior to my leaving I had arranged for Archie Wemyss to stay indefinitely with a newly-married friend of mine, Harry Crayford, of Benchly Hall, Sussex. He would pass on all my correspondence to Sir Arnold Withers. I thought this was better than corresponding direct. I know this sounds ultra

careful, but with a big gang like this one simply had to take infinite precautions.

I spent three days in Denby, roaming about and acquiring the local atmosphere. I bought one or two books on the county, and swotted up its history, and a rare store I came upon. One passage was particularly engaging: to wit the landing of the French at Goodwick in 1797. This gave me an idea. My primary duty here was to search the coast from end to end, making notes of anything that seemed to fit in with the smuggling gang.

I proposed first to make the pilgrimage to St. David's. This would afford me an opportunity to study the coast around that part. The episode of the attempted invasion opened out a new field. Above St. David's and up to Abergwaun there was a wild and rugged stretch of coastline. Posing as an archæologist with a bent for military history I could make daily journeys from St. David's to Goodwick and explore the coast at my leisure. So I buried my head deep in my books and learned how one, General Hoche, had planned to send over an army of released convicts, the Black Legion, to lay waste to Bristol. I learnt how they first landed at Ilfracombe, but left when they heard an English army was out against them. Sailing across the Bristol Channel, they landed in the county of Pembroke, but surrendered within twenty-four hours to the local yeomanry. Some old Welsh women with red flannel petticoats marched around a house on top of a hill and were mistaken for vast reinforcements.

Little did I realise that my interest in this dead and past episode was to be the means of my coming upon the most important clue in the case—the final clue which clinched suspicions into dead certainty.

I was glad when I was able to tell Jackson to pack my bags for Harford. I was eager to get on the ground so to speak, yet had to move slowly and circumspectly to build up a character for myself.

Arrived at Harford I very unobtrusively allowed it to be known that I intended making a pilgrimage to St. David's. I also remarked that I intended doing it on foot. The boots of the hotel quite frankly thought I was mad. I overheard him telling a maid about it. He could not understand why I should walk when a 'bus went there twice daily.

I intended walking for two reasons, first to better get the lie of the country, and secondly to get myself into good hard marching condition. I had always kept myself in pretty good trim by plenty of exercise; tennis, golf, and cricket, but although these are very excellent things, there is nothing which keeps a man in better fettle than tramping the hard high road. Any soldier will tell you that there is no phase of a campaign more exhausting than the marching. To march one must be fit.

From a commercial traveller I gathered the fact that it would be best to book a room in St. David's in advance, for although it was a remote spot, it became full of visitors at this time of the year, American

tourists and the like visiting the famous cathedral. The city being only a small place with some six hundred inhabitants it was very easily filled to overflowing. I thanked him, and telephoned for a room at the Goat's Horns Inn.

Next morning I started out, complete with rücksack and stout walking stick, and I felt that at last I was coming to grips with the job. The morning was good, the larks were singing, and altogether it was very good to be alive.

About a mile along the road I came up with a fisherman. He was going to Skolva, a fishing village not far from St. David's. Giving him good-day, I fell in alongside, for here was an opportunity to learn something of the coast first hand. He told me that he was walking till the 'bus should overtake him. Raising a heavy face to mine he favoured me with a crafty smile.

"You see, sir, I do save a copper or two if I do gain a stage. The 'buses be useful but they are daylight robbers, whatever!"

He was a garrulous individual, and by dint of careful handling I elicited a heap of useful information. He told me that the whole coast was an exceedingly treacherous one, and that there were not many places along it where even fishing smacks could run in with safety. (This, thought I, limited the field of operations.)

He turned a speculative eye on me.

"And look you, sir, 'tis wild, as wild as any in the British Isles I'll venture. You wait until you claps

your eyes on Oldgale Bay, sir," he continued, "it will be the grandest bit of rock and sand and sea you have ever seen in your natural. But wild! Wild as the sea itself, sir, especially on winter nights when the great rollers do play skittles with the boulders on the beach."

"Hum!" said I.

"Ah," he went on, "I could tell you tales that I'd venture would make your hair curl. Tales of our old coast that would make it curl and prick, look you. There's rum things happen along this coast, whatever. Rum things what don't bear talking about."

"Hum!" said I.

He shook his dark head, and I thought he was going to leave it at that. But the desire to confide a piece of news was on him, and no Welshman can resist that.

"Yes, indeed," he continued sinking his voice mysteriously, "there's rum things, look you, when a boat is found on the beach in the morning with no one to claim her. No one in her, no oars, but a parcel of silks and shawls under the thwart."

My ears pricked up at this, and I questioned him further, but on the subject of the boat he had nothing more to add.

He shook his head sullenly, and relapsed into silence. I could see by his little back eyes, however, he had more to tell, so let him alone.

"Or a dead man now," he said suddenly. "There's rum things when a dead man is found below the tide

mark. A dead man with no clothes on, and his body all black and blue from the sea's buffets. Nought to show where he comes from, whether he is foreign or home. Aye! It's a queer beach. It's a queer coast, sir." He dropped his voice to a whisper. "There's some nights, sir, there's some nights, when it is not safe to be on the beach—alone."

"Ah!" I filled my pipe and passed over my pouch, but my fisherman had imparted his grand tit-bit, and not a word more of the sea could I get out of him.

So I changed the subject to the more prosaic subject of land. Who owned it round about? What were the crops like? Could they grow corn? I gathered that the land although poor was well farmed, and that except for the "blasted rain" good crops could be got from it. On the subject of rain my fisherman waxed eloquent, and was still airing his grievances in this respect when his 'bus came along, and, bidding me to stay awhile on the Oldgale sands, he climbed in and was gone.

So good had been his company that I found on glancing at my map that I had covered some six miles, and would soon be dropping down to the sea at Oldgale. Goch Castle was perched like a hawk on a rock away to my right. From this, and the surly rock on Plumpton, I got my bearings, and as I was now on high ground I amused myself for awhile by picking out the various mountains whose heads I could distinguish in the Prescelly range. Looking at my map I saw that after climbing out of Oldgale

I should be on the peninsula proper, for the coast at this point swept around in a great rocky arch that formed the north side of St. Bride's Bay. Oldgale Bay lived up to the fisherman's description, and even I, who had seen the coastlines of a score of countries, was fain to admit that this was the fairest section I had ever seen. The purple of the heather and the deep gold of late gorse gleamed like royal robes on the rugged shoulders of the cliffs. The hard, sea-polished sand, still damp from the receding tide, shone like a vast silver mirror, where the sun struck it, and the sea crinkled in a million points of light.

It was very good, and following the fisherman's advice, I tarried here awhile. As I munched my sandwiches I thought of my mission and went carefully over the case point by point. After all, there was so little to go upon. The discovery by Archie Wemyss of the charred piece of paper bearing the words "Twrch Trwyth" was, at the best, a mere thousand to one chance. At home in the excitement of the disclosure it was so easy to build up an elaborate theory, but here, actually on the coast within a few miles of the supposed landing place, the very idea seemed preposterous. The sea, the sand, the quietly massive cliffs all seemed to wear such an impenetrable mask of innocence, that it was extremely hard to believe that evil lurked near at hand. And yet I had found sinister things under the most innocent of guises during the war, and a deadly strife raging silently in the most innocent surroundings.

I found myself wondering what I should do if I was a smuggler. How should I go about it? Should I have a base near the coast, or should I pin my faith on the mobility of a car and merely meet the cargo, load up, and get clear? If I had a base, what form would it take? Should I rent a house on the cliffs, and enwrap it in mystery, or should I enter into the life of the county and divert suspicion by becoming well known. How far should I be able to trust to the credulity of the fishermen? Should I have confederates among them?

These were nice points, and, spreadeagled on the sand, I dwelt on them all in turn, and revolved the questions over and over in my brain until I began to get a grip on the problem I was up against.

Something wet and cold pressed itself against my ear, and I sat up with a jerk to find myself looking into the questioning, distrustful eyes of the biggest Alsatian I had ever seen. A deep, rumbling mutter in the animal's throat intimated quite clearly that any more sudden movements would be discouraged, so I told him fatuously that he was a good dog, and turned my head around to look for his owner. At the same moment I heard a whistle from the opposite direction, and a clear ringing voice called the dog.

"Here, Skomer! How dare you! Come here! Come here at once!"

The dog flashed one more look at me, and ambled off to his mistress, who came swinging along the beach towards me.

"I'm awfully sorry," she began, then, "Why, if it isn't Colonel Warren! Who would have thought of meeting you in this outlandish place!"

I was just as surprised to see that the dog's owner was Lady Celia Ferlie, whom I had known since her schooldays. I bowed with mock courtesy.

"I must say, Celia, that I am surprised to find you the owner of a brute like that, anyway."

She laughed. "You don't mean to tell me that the redoubtable Colonel Bill Warren was frightened of this little pet."

I chuckled dryly. "You know you really ought to keep the little darling on a piece of string. He looked at me as if I were a bone."

"I am not his owner, really, although he is nearly always with me. You see he is being trained for a film dog."

"A what?"

"A film dog. You have surely seen dogs on the 'pictures.' They are trained to do all sorts of clever things."

"Such as growling at a poor devil sunning himself on the sand, I presume."

"Not quite. But he catches people you know, and holds the villain at bay until the hero comes along."

"Ah!" said I, "he would. Tell me, does he require much tuition."

Celia pouted. "Now you are being vindictive. He is quite a gentleman at heart. That is, to people who know him, of course," she added.

"Sorry, but I cannot say that I am fond of Alsa-

tians. They remind me too forcibly of those savage fellows the Germans used to keep at their prisoner of war camps. They could smell through any disguise. They used to put the fear of old Harry into me."

The dog looked pityingly at me.

"Ah, but that was in your bad old war days. It is different now that you are er—harmless."

I laughed. Celia was as candid as ever.

"I suppose you *are* harmless, Colonel," she continued, "I mean I suppose you have given up all those special stunts you used to go in for?"

I tried to look shocked. "My dear girl, I'm getting too old now you must remember. I'm one of the veterans who fought in the Great War; good Lord! Ages ago it seems."

"Old?" It was Celia's turn to laugh, which she did right merrily. "My dear man, you are quite an infant as yet. Why you haven't even been married once."

This time I looked shocked without trying to, and as I fished out my pipe I shot a surreptitious look at Celia. Frank and outspoken she always had been, but never cynical.

"Look here," she said, "if you are staying down here any length of time I'll introduce you to some friends who have been married three or four times, and the oldest one would be probably about as old as you."

"Good God!" I ejaculated. "Where on earth are you staying then?"

Celia laughed again, and I wondered why the deuce I felt angry.

"Poor Colonel Warren. You have fallen asleep it seems since the war. You retired down into some poky little hole in Sussex and sort of hibernated, if I may say so. Pater expressed a similar opinion a few months ago. Why, I remember you as a particularly brilliant young officer, and here you are all grown over with moss."

"Celia!"

"Now I'll tell you what I'll do. What are you doing down here, by the way?"

"Me?" I floundered. "I am er—studying a phase of the French Revolution. There was a landing at Fishguard, the er—French, you know."

She looked at me as if I had been a curiosity thrown up on the beach by the sea. "Great Scott! Has it taken you like that? Now *I've* joined the Movies. Ah! I thought that would startle you!"

"You—a—er—film actress?"

"Do you mean to say you haven't seen it in the papers, my good man? However, such is fame! Yes, I've joined the Silver Ring Company. You have heard of that, I hope? Good! There's hope for you yet. I will introduce you to our director if you will join us at lunch to-morrow. We are down here making a film. I have one of the leading parts, by the way. Incidentally, I will introduce you to some of those young men—and ladies—who have been—er—married three times. Now do come! Mr. Antrobus, that's our director, and you will hit it off well together.

I believe he has been to every country under the sun."

I gasped like a fish out of water, but was on the point of accepting when I remembered my real mission. It might not do to court undue publicity. However, I was not travelling incognito, and to make local acquaintances under such an introduction as Celia Ferlie's would be a help rather than a hindrance.

All this passed through my mind in a flash, and with a scarcely perceptible pause I accepted. "Righto, Celia. I'll be glad to come along. As you remark, I—er—perhaps need a little excitement."

Celia executed a little jig on the sands, and the Alsatian watched it with a puzzled expression and then looked up at me as if I was responsible for it.

"Good!" she cried. "Now, can I drive you into Harford? I'm going in, and the car is just over there." She pointed to the bottom of a cliff on the other end of the beach.

"No, thank you," I replied. "I'm on a pilgrimage to St. David's. I stay there to-night. The Goat's Horns Inn."

"Righto, Colonel. I'll send the car for you to-morrow morning. Come along just as you are. We are all a pretty Bohemian lot. Some of us are staying at a country house further up around the coast. You'll see it to-morrow. Delightful old spot. Most romantic. Good-bye. Come on Skomer!"

I raised my hat, smiled, wished her good-bye, collected my rücksack and fell to thinking furiously.

"What was it she had called me? Mossy face? Oh no! She had said I was 'all grown over with moss.' Hum! 'A mere infant.'—Ha! 'Hadn't even been married once.' Ho! 'Retired in a poky little hole in Sussex.' Hum! Poky little hole indeed! I would show her. 'Would I meet Mr. Antrobus?' Well, judging by all accounts, and looking at things by and large, would I not?

"He knew every country in the world, did he! And he had a large country house on the edge of the sea! Very interesting! Very interesting! The sooner we meet the better!"

I put up at St. David's at the Goat's Horns Inn, a quiet, unpretentious little place even in an unpretentious town. St. David's, a collection of grey stone buildings, set on a grim and grey peninsula, is, by reason of its cathedral, entitled to be called a "city." But anything less like a city can scarcely be imagined. Indeed the term "city" is almost an insult to St. David's, for unlike the busy town where the tram and 'bus and noise hold supreme, St. David's seems to be perpetually dreaming away an idle existence.

But the following morning saw me busy enough. I visited the Cathedral, a wonderful sight in its unique surroundings, its grey stones half hidden in a flying sea mist which swept in from the headland. Next I explored the ruined Palace of the Bishops, and generally "did" the "city" like any ordinary tourist. In the course of my wanderings I found myself at the

old harbour of Porth Cleis. To be precise, it was more of a creek than a harbour, and I confess that I was vastly disappointed. As a small port for old-time sailing vessels doing a regular trade, it was all very well, but as a dumping ground for smuggled goods it was altogether out of the question. I could see at a glance that, although remote, it was under observation, inasmuch as it was used by local fishermen, and what these worthies miss seeing is hardly worth recording. For a moment Archie's grand theories came down with a rush, and I laughed at myself for ever entertaining them. Then I remembered the interesting Mr. Antrobus and the theories rallied a little. Perhaps this was a *meeting* place, not a *landing* place. Thus comforted, I retraced my steps, and arrived back at the Goat's Horns at about eleven o'clock.

At eleven thirty a magnificent Daimler rolled silently up, and the chauffeur, a huge Nubian, presented a note. The landlord, walking backwards, cannoned into me in the hall, and nearly jumped out of his skin.

"Is—is this letter for you, sir?" he asked.

I glanced at the superscription and nodded, then opening the envelope I extracted a note from Celia.

"Dear Bill," I read, "we shall all be pleased to see you as arranged.

CELIA.

"P.S. I have not sent the Alsatian."

The negro stood by with a wide grin on his face, which vanished as if by magic when I spoke a few words in the Madis dialect, and mentioned the port of Ras Rawai, in the Red Sea.

"You know um Ras Rawai, baas?"

He had unconsciously lapsed into the pidgin English, or lingua-franca of the coast.

"Me know all places one time," I replied. "Ras Aber Dara. Suakim, and the great furnace places Jesira and Bir-Abea. Where you meet um baas Antrobus?"

"Me meet um at Merowe, in Dar Shaikiya."

It was out before he had realised it, and immediately he had said it he could have bitten out his tongue. I saw dark suspicion sweep like a wave over his face, and I almost regretted laying the trap. But a moment's reflection, and a fairly deep knowledge of the negro character, assured me that he would say nothing of this to his employer.

I pretended not to notice what he had said, and, telling the landlord that I would be back at about six, I entered the car.

For the first two miles or so I scarce noticed which way we were going so full were my thoughts of the Mr. Antrobus who knew Merowe in the land of Shaikiya. What business had taken him, a director of a film company to such a place? However, this could wait until I had met the gentleman.

I looked about me, and saw that, if possible, the land had become even more barren. Away to my left two great masses of igneous rock thrust their bare

heads through the thin covering of bog, turf and close gorse. The fields, shut in on their four sides by high banks and grey stone walls, were small, the reason being, I suppose, that wide open spaces suffered more from the ravaging winds. A harsh land, and a merciless one, where a living is wrung from a soil more stubborn than usual, only by the sweat of the brow.

Occasionally I caught a glimpse of the sea, slate colour, through the valleys. The day was dull and overcast, and a cold wind had sprung up since the early morning mist. I suppose we had travelled some nine miles when we turned into the gates of a drive. The drive dipped down in a long curve under a wood of gnarled and wind-tortured trees. The car ran so silently that I could catch faintly the murmur of the sea along nearby cliffs. It was exactly the sort of place I should have chosen for a base had I been running contraband, and my scalp tingled in that queer way it had when hot on the track of big game. That I had scented my quarry I now had no doubt, yet I had nothing more to go upon than theory and suspicion.

Luck, absolute, sheer, unadulterated luck, was responsible for my being here, and with that thought came another like a cold douche on my enthusiasm. What was Lady Celia Ferlie doing here amongst such people? She was the daughter of a well-known peer, it was unthinkable that she could be a party to the colossal scheme I was out to smash. Here was a snag, and a nasty one. The words of an old South

African friend came to my mind. "When in doubt go 'gaishley.* The spoor is hot, but go 'gaishley, Warren."

The car swung around smoothly, and came to a stop outside the porch of a large and rambling house whose style was reminiscent of many but particular to none. Celia came bounding out to meet me.

"Oh, splendid," she cried. "I hardly thought you would come."

I stepped out to meet her, and made what I hope was a suitable greeting, but truth to tell my eye was on the nigger. He sat like an ebony statue awaiting further orders, apparently gazing at nothing, but as he let in the clutch preparatory to taking the car around to the garage I saw the white of his eye roll around to me like the eye of a nervous horse.

"One up to you, Warren," said I.

"Eh? What did you say?" said Celia.

"I merely remarked that I was one up on you, Celia, for if my place in Sussex is a poky little hole, I guess this is the Black Hole of Calcutta."

Celia laughed, but checked at the sound of a step in the porch behind her.

"Oh, Colonel Warren," she said, "allow me to introduce you to Mr. Antrobus, *the* Mr. Antrobus."

He came slowly out to meet me, and when he spoke it was with a cultured drawl, rather pleasant to the ear. He was abnormally tall, quite six feet four, I should say, and his height seemed to be accentuated

*Kaffir—"go cautiously."

by a slight stoop in the shoulders. He peered short-sightedly from behind tinted spectacles, turning his head here and there in a slightly disconcerting manner. He gave one the impression that he was always on the look out for something he had mislaid, and I found, when talking to him, that my eyes involuntarily followed the direction of his stare whenever he turned his head. I noticed that his lantern jaw portrayed no trace of indecision, and that the rather beaky nose betokened force of character. On the whole he had a scholarly face, and produced a rather pleasant impression, but then, of course, I could not see the eyes clearly.

Were it not for the fact that I was so prejudiced in my mind against the man I should have liked him at once. But my whole suspicions were at work, gauging, testing, probing, searching the hidden man, and I treated his advances with a well-concealed reserve.

I was received with open arms by the whole actor fraternity, and was soon comfortably ensconced in an armchair, with a large cocktail at my side. There were half-a-dozen actors and three actresses present, besides five other men, who, I presumed, were concerned with the production side of the work.

By dint of careful questioning I soon found out those who resided out and those who actually stayed in the house. Of the ladies, Celia and one other actress and their maids occupied one wing of the house, whilst the third stayed in St. David's. This got me no further, but a division of the men was more

interesting. I found that, whereas the actors all stayed in St. David's, coming in each day for their work, the producing side of the staff all stayed in the house. Some of the actors were well known, but then so was the producer, Antrobus, but between the actors and the producers' side was a difference not to be explained in mere words. The actors were of necessity well-travelled men, and each had a perfect fund of anecdote at his ready command. But the producers all looked as if they might have come from anywhere from Wigan to Kamchatka or from Chicago to Ninji Novgorod. A thoroughly hard-bitten quartette. One especially, a Russian American, I judged him to be, looked as if he would be equally useful with bottle, pistol or knife, a dangerous, slant-eyed type, rejoicing in the name of Slinkof.

But Antrobus, I must confess, I could not place at all, peering here and there through his tinted glasses. His manner was suave and perfect, and of the whole bunch he was the only true gentleman among them. The actors were too fond of posing, second nature I suppose, while the producers, Slinkof, Kelly and Wright, pretended to be nothing else but what they were—hard-headed, slick business men, and succeeded pretty well.

There was one actor, though, to whom I took an instinctive dislike. He was one of those strongly masculine men with effeminate good looks. Deep down in his eyes there glowed a lambent fire, and the quick, nervous gestures betokened a fund of dynamic energy, a dangerous type. I noticed, too, that there

appeared to be a closer bond between him and the producers than was apparent in the case of the remaining actors. He was introduced to me as El Draco, a rising young film actor.

Taken altogether, they were as Bohemian a crowd as any to be found on the stage and in the studios. And as the "films" attract men with outstanding brains and abilities from all over the world, and as such men have forceful personalities, I must admit that there would be no difference in the looks of this group and any other group of producers and actors. Yet I was conscious in my innermost mind that here all was not as it should be. The merriment, the bonhomie, the enthusiasm for their work, all struck a false note to my suspicious ear. I made a mental resolve to inquire deeply into the history of the Silver Ring Film Company on my return, and for this reason took particular note of the name and peculiarities of each man connected with it.

Needless to say, I kept my end up with small talk, and did not show that I was any more than ordinarily interested in them or their doings. I listened politely to details concerning their work, but was hard put to it to conceal my feelings when I heard that, amongst other films, they were working on one in connection with the Arthurian Legend.

Antrobus was talking directly behind me when I was informed of this, and as the words "Arthurian Legend" were spoken I noticed a distinct pause in his conversation. I did not turn around, however, but merely finished my cocktail and praised the

mixer. I asked what other films they were working on, and was much interested to learn that they were doing a "gun running" film, and also a series connected with the histories of Pembrokeshire castles.

We then went in to lunch, a most informal affair, at which people came and went as if it were a hotel. Some of the actors had donned their working costumes, which, needless to say, created a bizarre atmosphere.

I found myself seated between Celia and Antrobus, a position which, could I have foreseen it, was fraught with danger. The first inkling I had was Celia's opening remark.

"Oh, Mr. Antrobus, I wish you would tell Colonel Warren about your adventures in Pekin. He knows China like the back of your hand; don't you, Bill?" she added, turning to me.

I scratched an ear thoughtfully, as Antrobus peered short-sightedly at me, and gave a non-committal "Hum."

"Do you know China—very well?" asked Antrobus point blank.

"I know a little of it," I replied with a smile. "I'm afraid Celia over-rates my—er travels."

"You know you know a lot, Colonel," interrupted Celia reproachfully. "Why, I remember Daddy telling me how you broke up the Wing-Fu Society. A job of work that everybody thought was impossible."

I caught my breath at this, for of all things calculated to reveal my connection with Sir Arnold Withers this would to anyone who knew China.

Over a spoonful of soup I saw Antrobus peer first left, then right, then up to the ceiling in his peculiar manner, and his reply more than confirmed my fears.

"Oh! So you are *that* Colonel Warren, are you? I.D. work in China must be the devil of a job I should think."

This was a really bad start, but I put the best face on it possible.

"Yes. It broke me up pretty considerably, nerves and all that, you know. Had to quit the service when I came back. Taking a long holiday."

Celia laughed merrily at this. "He calls being buried alive in a little hole called 'Dene Chase' in Sussex a holiday, Mr. Antrobus. And he is studying some frowsy old military history. I brought him along here for you and your boys to put some pep into him."

Antrobus smiled behind his tinted glasses.

"We will certainly do our best, charming lady," he said.

During luncheon I tried all I knew to pump Antrobus as to his travels, more especially as to his sojourn in China, but whilst he related anecdotes of travel in India, in Russia and Asia Minor he carefully avoided China. And he denied ever having been in Africa, which, in view of the statement surprised out of his Nubian chauffeur, was most interesting. I made a mental note to follow up this inquiry, and watched his face carefully as I purposely ran over some of the places I had visited in Africa, but I could see no flicker of recognition behind his tinted glasses. I came

to the conclusion that Antrobus was too old a bird to be caught with chaff, but at the same time I had derived a certain amount of information from his omissions. This is a little trap which I have successfully employed against some of the cleverest secret service men in the world, and Antrobus was no exception. Whereas I had talked freely of my connection with the Secret Service in China, I noticed that Antrobus was most reticent as to his doings in that country. And when I dropped the subject he made no attempt to open it again. It was, of course, most unfortunate that I had to disclose my connection with the Secret Service, but as this had unavoidably become known through Celia's impetuosity, I saw no point in glossing over the fact. On the contrary, I referred to it as much as I could until my listeners must have been bored stiff. All the time I had been turning the case over in my mind, and I had arrived at the conclusion that as my connection with the I.D. was known, our cause would be best served by a full report, much as what has been set down here, and then to retire out of the case. The more I thought of it in this light the better it seemed. Of course, it was hard luck my having to give it up so early, but if this was the gang we were after, my every movement after to-day would be watched, and my continued presence would only be a danger.

Hard on the heels of this thought came another that I might be in danger even now. I glanced around the table at the faces of the men in a new light, but the only man who was taking any notice

of me at all was Antrobus, who smiled at me from behind his tinted glasses, and asked me if I would like to see the boys at work. I nodded a reply, my wits now working rapidly. Before I left this house it was up to me to obtain some sort of proof which would associate this seemingly innocent film company with the cocaine gang.

In case of accidents I should like to have a word with Jackson over the telephone. We always had a set of code messages for such occasions couched in simple instructions as to what clothing, etc., I required sent forward.

"Ah, by the way, Celia," I asked abruptly, "have you such a thing as a telephone here?"

"Yes, there is one in the hall," she replied.

"I've suddenly remembered," I explained, "that if I stay here and watch you people at work that I shall miss the post at St. David's."

Antrobus turned his snaky head, and his tinted eye-glasses fixed themselves on me.

"Is there something you require?" he asked politely.

"As a matter of fact I came away from Harford without a couple of books I particularly want before I visit Strumble Head."

"We may have them in the library here, Colonel," resumed mine host. "Our historical film work necessitates a larger collection of books than you might think."

"Thank you," I replied, "I hope you have them."

With that Antrobus and I adjourned to the library.

"What books do you require, Colonel?" he asked.

"Oh, two books about the landing of the French in Pembrokeshire at the time of the Revolution."

"Aha! A student of history, I see," chuckled Antrobus. "Now we are on familiar ground, Colonel."

"Why! Are you interested in things military?"

"I should just say I am, Colonel. And I may say that I have turned out some really good films based on the drama of actual history. Beats all your made up plots. Now that landing of the French you spoke of,—I scent a good plot in that."

I told him what I knew of it. How one, General Hoche, planned it in Brittany, and how the Black Legion was formed, and of its journey to England and its abandoned attempts of the sack of Bristol, and of its subsequent landing and surrender in Pembrokeshire."

"Very interesting, Colonel," said Antrobus when I had finished. I guess I'll make a film of that. Introduce the love element and some good stirring action. Now are the books you require here? What are their titles?"

I told him, and together we searched the well-lined shelves. I found one or two books on the local history which contained short accounts of the landing, but as I had purposely named two which I thought it most unlikely that he would have, needless to say we did not find them. But, in truth, I almost forgot about them when my eyes, sweeping along a shelf, came

level with a copy of the *Mabinogion*. I was hard put to it to keep the excitement out of my voice.

"Well upon my word, Antrobus, I've come across some queer books in this library, but what the deuce is this one about?"

I pointed to the *Mabinogion*, and at the same time took it down as casually as I knew how. Observing Antrobus closely, I noticed that a pulse began to hammer at his temple, but otherwise he gave no sign, and his voice remained calm.

"Oh that is a book of old folk tales about the legendary King Arthur. We use it for reference in connection with the film we are preparing."

I hastily turned over the pages and saw that many passages were underlined.

"Hadn't you better telephone for your books, Colonel?" asked Antrobus raspingly. "We do not appear to have what you require."

"Hum! Yes. Perhaps I had better. Though you have one or two which nearly give me what I want. Funny sort of tosh this. Cannot make top or tail of it. What do they mean by the 'Whelp of Greid' and a 'Boar with silver bristles?'" I replaced the book as casually as I had taken it down, and expressed my regret at having given so much trouble. But as I turned to go to the telephone my thoughts were tumbling over each other. One of the phrases underlined was Porth Cleis and the other was the Twrch Trwyth. We were either right on their trail, or I had experienced one of those marvellous coincidences

that are stranger than fiction. But, of course, there was nothing I could definitely put my hands on, for all of these so-called proofs were built up on a theory so nebulous as to be almost absurd.

But another link was to be added in the chain of circumstantial evidence I was forging. And about this one there was something sinister. In fact, it was the first hint I had received of actual danger. As I picked up the receiver, I realised almost at once that the telephone was out of order. I tapped impatiently on the rest and shouted into the mouthpiece, but it was of no avail.

"Hello," said Antrobus, who had followed me into the hall, "what's the trouble? Can't you get 'em?"

"Beastly thing is out of order," I replied testily.

"What? That is a nuisance! What we shall do without it to-morrow I don't know. We have got a busy day before us," he added.

"Well, I must do without my books after all, I'm afraid," I said ruefully. "I must manage with what I have by me."

"Are you sure it's out of order," asked Antrobus. "I was using it myself as you came in. It was perfectly all right then."

"Hum!" said I.

"Hi, Kelly," shouted Antrobus. "Go and tell that lazy lump of a negro I want him to see if he can do anything to this 'phone. It's gone 'phut." He turned to me commiseratingly. "If he cannot get it to work he shall drive you back at once, Colonel. You can come and see us work another day."

"Thanks. But those books are not as urgent as all that," I replied. "And as I am on a walking tour perhaps I'll walk back along the coast. How far is it, by the way?" I dropped my hand into my coat pocket as if to look for a map, but in reality my fingers closed around the butt end of a pistol. Things might be getting warm in a moment or two, and I did not intend to be caught completely napping: I saw Antrobus's eyes narrow under his tinted glasses. He had noticed my movement as I intended he should. If he was innocent there was no need for his suspicion, and if he was guilty he was in quite as nasty a fix as I was. He could start nothing here in the house, as it was perfectly obvious that not all of the company was in the real swim. If he and his crowd put me away in the house, the attention of the forces of law and order would be concentrated on it, which was precisely what he wished to avoid. The lengthy lines down the side of his mouth curved into a smile expressing utmost geniality. His face positively beamed. The tinted glasses turned themselves directly on me.

"Excellent idea, Colonel. I will walk part of the way with you and show you 'Deadman's Bay,' where we are working on our gun-running film."

The polished ease of the man was unbelievable. From the manner in which he said this one would not have imagined that he had a care in the wide world. Yet in my eyes he must have read disaster to his schemes.

But I had made the fatal mistake of underrating an opponent. I imagined that I held him in an

awkward fix. I had discounted the idea of physical danger for the moment for the reasons just advanced. In spite of the warning of Sir Arnold Withers I had failed to realise the lengths to which they would go.

For as I was about to accept Antrobus's smiling invitation, I felt that the house had fallen on my head, and a jagged flash seared my eyes. Without so much as a groan I pitched forward into the sinewy arms Antrobus held out to catch me. I had been sandbagged.

When next I recovered consciousness I found myself in a most singular predicament. Surging upwards from the black waters of concussion I struck out feebly with my arms. I imagined that I was a swimmer at the end of a cross Channel swim. Gradually the mists cleared away from my brain and I looked about me. The first thing I saw was the solicitous face of mine host. I felt cold, shivered and put my hand up to my neck, and drew it away with a sensation of fear, for I had touched naked skin. I sat up in alarm and found to my profound astonishment that I was clad solely in a bathing costume. As in a dream I became aware that Antrobus was speaking.

"Ah! I am pleased to see you are better, Colonel."

I looked about me and saw that I was lying on the floor of a saloon car, and that the car was in motion. Next I discovered with an unpleasant jar that my feet were bound, and that Antrobus was holding

a gun pointed unwaveringly at my chest. He smiled gently. "I am so sorry we found it necessary to bundle you off so unceremoniously."

I bluffed. "What is the meaning of this outrage, sir? You will suffer for this."

"No good, Colonel," laughed Antrobus as he shook a playful finger at me. "We know all about you. Had you watched as soon as you arrived at Denby."

In spite of myself I gave a start.

The tinted glasses stared down at me and I felt like an insect impaled on a pin.

"Yes," he purred softly, "you and your young friend Archie Wemyss hit the nail on the right head. A lucky blow! A lucky blow! But dangerous. Very! Much as I regret it, therefore, I have arranged for your definite—er—removal."

I struggled and tried to grasp the pistol. The eyes behind the tinted glasses narrowed into evil slits, and the voice became as metallic as a file on steel.

"Still, you fool, unless you want your stomach torn out. These Erfurts, with their soft nosed bullets, make ragged holes."

Reading sheer, stark, callous murder in both voice and eyes I relapsed, biding my time. My head still swam from the effects of the blow, and the slight exertion had left me weak.

"I am pleased to see you are responsive to reason," continued Antrobus softly, as if nothing untoward had happened. He regarded me much as a cat does a mouse, and an evil smile twitching the

corners of his mouth warned me that I was to be played with.

However "while there is life there is hope" is a homely motto but a very sound one, and making the best of my predicament I tried to wring information out of him by random shots.

Antrobus smiled with evil pleasantness.

"For the second time, Colonel, I must remind you that bluff is no good. And even if you found out anything now it would not be the slightest use."

His smooth, unctuous voice struck a numbing terror into my heart, and I felt a queer pricking over my scalp. If he had looked grimly murderous it would not have been so hard. But, contemplating murder, he was as suavely polite as if asking a friend to dinner. It was damnable, and, as I say, I felt mortally afraid.

He coughed softly, as if drawing my reluctant attention. "We have devised quite a thrilling little exit for you, my dear Colonel. As a matter of fact I take considerable pride in it. It is so absurdly simple, and so utterly safe—for us." He peered at me short-sightedly and I shivered.

"But you will not be the first to go out that way, Colonel. There were two others who—er—annoyed us, and we found it necessary to persuade them to leave us. One was found drowned on Oldgale Beach a few weeks ago. You may have heard about it? No? Well you surprise me. We have a little cave, you see, and in the cave is a deep hole connected with

the open sea by a narrow tunnel. Bull Hole the natives call it, because it bellows and roars when the tide is up. We merely drop you down the hole, and when the tide comes up you will be sucked out through the tunnel. When you get to the other end you will be quite drowned. Oh, there will be no hope of coming out alive. Bull Hole will see to that. And in a day or so, perhaps a week, your dead body will be washed ashore, bruised and battered, but undoubtedly drowned." He laughed softly, and the tinted glasses shook. "No trace of physical violence, you see. And your clothes will be found on the beach, where you left them before very foolishly going in to bathe. One of our actors is wearing your clothes at the moment. Impersonating you in fact. He will be seen by quite a number of people who will mistake him for you. An alibi, you will admit, is a useful thing to have, Colonel. Don't look at me like that. I assure you I deprecate this step sincerely, but we must safeguard ourselves."

"You infernal scoundrel!" I burst out. "You damned murdering swine! You'll swing for this. No man ever got away from Arnold Withers. He will get you if he tracks you to China."

Antrobus smiled pleasantly. "Perhaps I shall get him first, Colonel," he drawled. "And we will certainly get Archie Wemyss. He is only a young fool, but he has been lucky."

The slight swaying of the well-sprung car over an atrociously bad road brought his face within reach of my hands, and I swung up my fist in a swift uppercut

which unfortunately missed his chin by a fraction. Quite unperturbed, he drew further away. "Bad luck, Colonel," he said. "We didn't have time to handcuff you. Our departure from the house was somewhat hurried."

I swore viciously. The swaying of the car became worse, and I sensed that we had left the track, such as it was and that we were running along the tip of the cliffs. I could hear the muttered roar of the surf, and wondered whether the tide was out or in. The car tilted, and descended a pretty hefty gradient. The nigger driver was no fool. In a little while we came to a halt and he opened the door.

Antrobus held out a pair of handcuffs to him "Fasten him up. He is dangerous!"

The nigger's strength was prodigious. In a trice he had my hands together and the gyves slipped over them. Picking me up like a sack of corn he slung me over his shoulder, and carried me down a sunken cliff path to the beach. I wriggled, and looked about me to see if there was any sign of chance help, but the spot had been well chosen. The sides of the coombe cut us off from the sight of any chance agricultural labourer above, and the only other living things in sight besides ourselves were some seagulls wheeling and mewing high overhead. A rabbit broke cover and scuttled up the bank, displacing a small shower of loose stones. Once the negro stumbled and Antrobus ripped out a curse. I sensed that he was more badly scared than he had showed in the car, and in spite of my predicament I smiled. It

was comforting to think that at least one other besides myself was feeling rattled. We were now down on the firm white sand, and the swinging crash of the sea became louder. The sun was settling blood red out to sea; blood red, and throwing its beams along a shimmering path of crimson. With a feeling akin to reprieve I saw the tide was out. I had, in any case, a few more hours to live, and hoped against hope for a last minute rescue. But as Jackson was left behind in Harford I could not see from where possible help would come. Celia! How about Celia? Good God! Was it possible that she was mixed up with this dirty crowd? I thrust the thought away from me as unworthy. But with it came another more sinister one. Was it possible that she was in danger? That Antrobus would put her away if she found out anything about the gang I was certain. A man who had devised a death for me such as he had indicated was capable of anything. A cold perspiration broke out on my brow. God! What a fool I had been! A blind, silly fool! Like a blind, silly fool I had walked into the trap, thinking how clever I was at finding one or two futile little clues under their noses. Lord, how they must have laughed at me. And now I was to pay the penalty for it. And through my blind, ignorant folly, Celia and Wemyss and poor old Arnold Withers would be in imminent danger.

I could imagine how Antrobus and his crowd would deal with police inquiries after my body had been recovered. Oh! they were clever, diabolically clever.

My clothes on a lonely beach, my stated intention of walking back along the cliffs, my request for a bathing costume; it was all planned out to the last detail. Antrobus would probably say that he had warned me about bathing as the coast was dangerous. I writhed impotently. He would hoodwink Scotland Yard even, as it would be sheer impossibility to suspect his hand in the tragedy. What a fool I had been! What a blind, ignorant fool!

A peregrin falcon screamed harshly high up over the cliff and it sounded in my confused mind like a note of doom. The red sun was suddenly blotted out, and the roar of the sea grew fainter. We had entered a cave. I heard Antrobus give a sigh of relief.

The negro commenced to blow. He was carrying me up a shelving declivity to some sort of upper cave. Presently we were in utter blackness and the light from an electric torch cut the density like a knife. A dull, faint roar persisted, like the sound heard when a sea shell is held to the ear.

"The roar of the Bull," said Antrobus pleasantly. "It will get louder presently when the tide creeps nearer."

Gooseflesh crept over my skin, but I answered not a word.

The negro dumped me suddenly on the floor of the cave, and I saw that close beside me yawned a great cavernous hole. From it came the dull, faint, persistent roar, and listening intently I could catch the swish and lap of turbulent water.

My brain worked like lightning. As soon as my bonds were cut I meant to have a dash for liberty at the risk of being shot or breaking my neck. Antrobus drew the nigger aside and I heard them whispering. The negro came back, and without saying a word took my hands in a vice-like grip. I felt Antrobus behind me fumbling at my feet and braced myself for a supreme effort. As soon as I felt my feet free I kicked back with all my might and felt my foot land with a thud in his chest. A muttered curse from Antrobus, a snorting grunt from the negro and I felt myself hurled irresistibly forward. Next instant I was falling through space, and landed in a heap with the breath all but knocked out of my body.

Looking up when I had collected my wits I saw the pencil of light flickering about the cave. My handcuffs had been deftly taken off by the negro as he had pinioned my hands in his. A clever piece of work. I hoped I had broken Antrobus's ribs. The light grew steady and winked down on me. Barely I distinguished the shadows of Antrobus and the nigger. Came Antrobus's voice, now venomous and snarling with rage. "I hope you will appreciate Bull Hole, you rotten spy. You have two hours to live. You may delude yourself that you can swim as the water fills the pit, but you can't. Wait till you see the first rush. Wait till it boils and seethes about you like a cauldron. Swim, you damned fool then! You'll swim to hell before you are out of Bull Hole."

I felt like shouting at the devil, but, choking back my wrath, I kept silent.

"Ha! The fight has been knocked out of you now, eh? You are beaten, Warren, beaten fairly and squarely by a better man. Good night! I hope you'll die hard."

With this parting shot he called to the nigger, and I heard their steps recede, slipping occasionally on the polished surface of the rock. The light from the torch flickered faintly, like a will o' the wisp, and was gone altogether, leaving me in a deep, inky blackness which could be felt. I was in their death trap, Bull Hole.

For a while I lay as if stunned, until a whining roar made me start up in a sweat. God! What was that?

Shivering like a badly frightened horse I stood listening. A deep muffled boom, a husky, hissing roar and a sudden draught of dank salt air passed like a cold hand over my sweating face. A gurgling, sucking sigh, a sliding smooth hiss, and I knew instinctively that the concentrated fury of a great Atlantic roller had assaulted the sea end of the passage.

I knew, without further assurance, that I was in a veritable death trap, but in a sort of blind desperation I groped my way around the walls. There was absolutely no foothold, and a few futile jumps convinced me that I could never lay my fingers on the lip of the hole. The sides were worn smooth as glass by the countless tides which had surged in and out. A fly could scarcely crawl up the surface. A weird desperation seized me and I hurled myself again and

again at a slight projecting hump which I discovered at the side opposite to the tunnel. This proved to be but a snare and a delusion, and in less than five minutes I was bruised and impotent. A black rage surged up in me so that all fear was quenched. The drippings and sighings and gurglings did not affect me nearly so much as the smooth tantalising hump which I could not grip.

I sat down half-exhausted, glaring impotently at a damp blank wall I could sense rather than see. My fingers and toes were bleeding from the rough contact with naked rock. My chin was bruised where I had mistaken the distance of the damp black wall, and had landed full front on a solid ungiving mass, only to fall back with my breath almost beaten out.

I sat down with my head in my hands staring into nothingness, and listening to the surging roar and hiss and boom and gurgle of the dark waters.

And it was gradually borne upon me that I was doomed.

I tried shouting, but my voice was hurled back on me by the inky black roof. Not a whisper of it could have been heard outside.

But now that I was really up against it, my brain became cool and calculating. The temporary panic had been fought down. I knew that if ever I was to get out alive I should need every ounce of bone and muscle and brain and nerve.

What was it that Antrobus had taunted me with before he left? "Two hours to live, and then a swim to Hell."

Two hours! And I had already wasted a precious quarter of an hour.

That meant that the water in the tunnel was one and three quarter hours away. How long was the tunnel?

My brain reeled at the thought which had leapt into being. But I forced myself to think about it, and to recollect all that Antrobus had told me of the tunnel. I remembered that he had said the sea end of the tunnel was always under water even at the lowest tides. I interpreted this to mean that it came out in the sea just under the line of the lowest tide. I had noticed before being carried into the cave that the sea was not far out, and that the beach shelved steeply. This was all to the good.

An hour and three quarters to go. The tunnel would now be nearly half full. As the tide rose so would the water in the tunnel, until it poured into the cave and swept me out like a cork. There was just the barest possible chance that I might be able to swim under water through the tunnel and reach the open sea. No chance at all when the tunnel was full. But the merest dog's chance now it was half full. Time for action had arrived. Every minute I waited now lessened my chances. Nay, every second.

My friends always told me that I could swim like a trout, and I prided myself on the length of time I could stay under water.

With a fast beating heart I felt my way around and wriggled into the tunnel. It was, I found, about

four feet high, and the sides varied in width from, I guessed, five to six feet. A noisome place! Great strong lengths of weed hung down from the walls, and I shuddered to think what would happen if one became entwined around my limbs. The air trembled with the boom of the breakers far off. Passing as swiftly as I could over the polished, uneven surface, I came much sooner than I expected on water. A dim, greyish shape advanced on me through the blackness, and before I could make up my mind what it was I was struggling in the grip of swirling water. The suction was well nigh irresistible.

It flashed on my brain that the struggle would come when the next wave came in, so I husbanded my strength. There was now no turning back.

The water was now up to my neck, and the roof of the tunnel pressed down on my head. Steadying myself, I took a grip on a boulder wedged into a crevice, and hung on like grim death as the next wave came in. Half under, half out of the water, I battled to retain my hold whilst the great green monster tore by. Sobbing and gasping for breath, I fought until I felt the turn, then, filling my lungs to their utmost capacity, I thought a prayer and plunged in. I had no need to swim, the current sucked me along irresistibly. I felt a tug on my foot and lashed out wildly. The weed had got me. No! I was clear of it! Battered and bruised, I held my breath until my ears were filled with roaring, and orange specks floated before my eyes. If I could not come up in another second I was done. My

senses were swinging. My arms and legs felt like lead. My body felt curiously light, and I thought of big bloated spiders. Nature could stand no more, my breath oozed out, and had to be replaced with more. My head struck a boulder and a million lights spun and danced before my eyes. I was going, I was going, it was all over. . . .

CHAPTER IV

"WHICH TELLS HOW JERRY SCANT ENTERTAINED A 'DEAD' MAN TO BREAKFAST."

I DO not know to this day how I was saved from Bull Hole. I do not remember coming out of it. After my head struck the boulder all was blank until I found myself being battered against some jagged rocks at the foot of a high, dark cliff. More by good luck than skill, I clambered out and lay for a while utterly exhausted. I climbed up a little higher out of reach of the incoming tide. I saw that to attempt to reach the top would be sheer folly, and I did not want to swim back into the bay, where the cave was, for fear of detection and capture. The roaring from Bull Hole was an awesome thing, and I shuddered whenever I thought of it. As Antrobus had said, nothing could live in it when the tide was full in, and, barring a miracle, it would be impossible for one man out of a million to escape as I had done at half-tide. So I decided to wait until darkness set in, and then to round the point and land in the next bay.

The weather was warm, but long before darkness set in I was chilled to the bone, and I did not relish the inevitable swim which lay in front of me. Add

to this the terrible experience I had just been through, and couple with it a gnawing anxiety lest I should be seen clinging to the cliff, and you will realise that my plight was dire.

It was therefore with considerable misgiving that I eventually lowered myself into the surging green water and struck out across the bay. I will not tell of the harrowing nature of that swim, 'twere too wearisome. Long before I reached the shore I felt that life had left me. A dogged determination and a dull rage that burned deep down inside of me were the only things which brought me at last to the shore. When I lay in a state of collapse on the beach, it was this same dangerous rage which brought me up, like a tiger cat, to the throat of one I was soon afterwards to call friend.

For if ever a man needed a friend I did at the moment when Antrobus and Slinkof appeared at the top of the cliff.

Jerry Scant was that friend. Artful Jerry Scant. Clever Jerry Scant. To him, the gipsy, the poacher, I told my tale, all of it, not omitting one detail, for I knew I could trust this man till death if need be. It was to this man I told my tale as I sat over breakfast at dawn, clothed in his clothes and eating his food. I came to him with nothing, yet he received me and made me welcome.

And it is not too much to say that without Scant this tale would not have been written. As I finished my story Jerry sat crouched over the fire for awhile without a word. Pulling a wicked-looking pipe from

his pocket he proceeded to fill it with wicked-looking tobacco.

"Well, pard," he said at length, "ye are a lucky man and no blooming error. I'm about the only man in the country who has seen Bull Hole when the tide is up. The natives won't go near the cave even at low tide. Says it's haunted! Not so sure as it ain't either. I bet that nigger was frightened! I'll lay a flask of rum to a nettle he was frightened. I'll lay two flasks of rum to a nettle he was frightened. I'll lay——"

"Quite right," I interrupted, "but let's consider the future, Jerry. What's going to happen now? Let us get it all clear. Strictly speaking, you know, I'm dead."

Jerry's pipe dropped in the fire, and he let out a laugh like the explosion of a Mills bomb.

"Crikey!" he said, "I've been entertaining a dead man to breakfast. That's the queerest thing Jerry Scant's ever done. And I tell ye, pard, he's done some queer uns."

"Evidently you agree then, Jerry, that I'm dead," I went on, "but to make it more natural someone must find the body."

"'Ere, stow that, pard," said Jerry suspiciously.

"Ah! you do not quite 'get me,' Jerry. Our friends up at the house are a suspicious crowd you may be sure: they will feel easier in their minds if the body is found."

Jerry smiled broadly. "Pard! You and me will get on well together. You uses your brains!"

"I think I can manage it for them, Jerry. We will allow the body to remain in the sea for a week or so, shall we? That will keep them on tenterhooks. I've some influential friends up in London, Jerry. They will see that a body is washed ashore and identified as mine. My house will shortly be sold and will be suitably gone into them. Good old Jackson! I chuckled duly, for I could picture some of Aunt Jack's men trying to pump Jackson for information. Seven to nine they would try it, but I knew Jackson and they did not.

"Now look here, Jerry. I am going to put the case to you, for we have got to work together. First of all, I must have some clothes. A rig-out as near what you wear yourself will do. No better, no worse. A black patch to go over one eye, and other appearances which you consider necessary. Take me somewhere where I can be hidden until you procure them. And if you can supply me with pencil and paper, I must write up some reports for H.Q., and a confidential note for Jackson."

Jerry's face was a study. For all he calling me "pard," I do not think that he thought to see pictures that I intended to live along with him. I waited in some trepidation as to what he would have to say to this, for Jerry had considerable force of character, and if he did not intend to allow me to stay, no power would make him.

"Interesting you, pard," he said. "Just right if anybody had told me that I was going to take a partner into my concern, I should have jumped on

him with both feet. With both feet d'ye understand. Both of 'em, and no blooming error. But now ye asks me I'm hanged if I know what to do. I've always worked lone ye see. I'm a lone dog. No man is me friend, and a mighty lot of 'em are me enemies. Every one of 'em is my game. But if I had ye 'long with me you'd find me true. When Jerry Scant gives his hand it would have to be cut off before he'd do his pal a bad turn. Now if ye'll come with me ye must take my hand and oath. Ourselves against the world. Ye'll have to pinch yer food, rob hen-roosts like a fox, dodge the police, snare rabbits on other people's ground, poach a salmon, live hard and rough, take shine and rain, calm and blow, and not mind my damning your eyes at least once a day."

Slowly I held out my hand and my eyes met his. "Ourselves against the world," I said.

"Strike my pony's sides purple and pink," he gasped. "You don't mean it, pard?"

"I'll be your pal, Jerry," I replied.

"Then blister me if we will do any stealing, partner, not while you are with me." He dropped his voice wheedlingly. "But poaching ain't stealing, pard, is it? Not good honest poaching. That's not stealing, pard, is it? Do you know, pard, I do like a little taste of pheasant now and again. 'Tis the king of all meats, though mind you, deer takes a bit of beating. But a pheasant, Lawd love me, pard, but you wait till I cook ye a pheasant."

I smiled. "Poaching it is then, Jerry," said I. "I'm partial to pheasant myself. You've good taste,

Jerry, my lad. It takes a cultured taste to appreciate pheasant as you do."

And now we were up and doing, for there was much to do. The fire was damped out.

"Never leave a fire, mate," quoth Jerry. "It ain't sporting."

The tent was folded up and placed on the narrow cart. There is an art in loading the gipsy's long, narrow cart. Too much at the rear, and, as Jerry said, you travel along like a racing motor boat, all stern and no stem. Too much on the front and you plough up the hard highroad. So he made me sit on it at a point immediately over the axle and packed his equipment around me back and front. Unshaven, my face artistically grimed, it would have taken a keener eye than the ones behind the tinted glasses to have spotted me. But in case of accidents, Jerry took me by such devious ways that at scarcely any point of our journey were we on exposed ground. The sunken cart track, the long marshy valleys, the overhanging bank of trees, the very rise and fall of ground all combined to make our transit inconspicuous. That was the most peculiar thing about Jerry. No one ever came upon him unawares, whereas he always came upon people unsuspected. One moment he was not anywhere in sight; the next he was at your side with his gruff, "Good-day to ye. Can you do with a broom now, or a fine walking-stick?" The gruffness would change to a wheedling note. "A fine walking stick now, honey? A jewel of a blackthorn! I'll wager the Squire hasn't a better one his-

self. No? Then be damned to ye for taking a gentleman's time."

We had left the sea far behind us, and so far as I could judge, were somewhere in the neighbourhood of Littlestone. As we were proceeding down a narrow lane a thin scream rose on the air. Loosing the pony's head, Jerry took a couple of steps forward and leapt the hedge like a stag. Before I could count ten he was back again with a rabbit and the snare as well.

"Here's our dinner, pard." He caught my eyes and reddened. Without a word he pitched the snare back over the hedge, then, turning to me, he waved the dead rabbit in my face. "But the rabbit we eat, damn and blast your grey eyes," he said fiercely.

We came presently to a long, dark wood, which lay alongside the road. Halfway along it we came to a gate which Jerry opened. This gave on to a cool grass lane, or "ride" as the keepers would call it, cut straight through the wood. Proceeding along this for a hundred yards, he led the pony into the heart of the wood, and we came upon a long disused stone quarry. Into this little stone-sided arena he pushed and bade me dismount.

"There we are, pard. You'll be safe here. We will have dinner first, then I'll push on with the moke into Harford. Behind that bush is an old lime kiln. You crawl in there when I've gone. You'll find candles and matches, also paper and pens. That's my 'hawffice'," he chuckled drily. "I go in for pig dealing sometimes, pard. You wouldn't think now to look at me as I had any money would you? No?

Well neither does anybody else. See? I'll show you my banking account one day. 'Twill surprise ye I venture."

We had our meal, and Jerry showed me his retreat, and although small it was comparatively comfortable, with a bench, table and a chair without a back. Two candles stuck in bottles provided the illumination. Jerry set off without delay to Harford, telling me to expect him back at midnight.

"Keep low, pard," he advised, "keep low, and don't go out before having a careful peep around. Ye'll find a bit of bread and cheese in that cupboard, and maybe a bottle of home-brewed. Keep low and trust to old Jerry Scant."

With that he was gone, silently, as was his wont. I heard him speak to the horse once and then heard him no more. As silently as ghosts Jerry and his equipage had gone from the quarry and were on their way to Harford.

I turned to the table, and drawing pen and paper towards me, wrote a detailed report to Sir Arnold Withers explaining the position to date. At the close I detailed my recommendations. I reasoned that any sudden move on the part of H.O. would precipitate the flight of our important birds. Such people as those always have an avenue of escape, and the only way to take them is to catch them red-handed, so to speak. This was the job for an individual, not for an organised raid. I compared the case with certain of the spy cases during the war, where the enemy had found means of tapping news

from our own Secret Service. So efficient was their espionage that any concerted action always scared our birds, and we made a few unimportant captures, the larger hawks appearing again on a new horizon. We had eventually run them to earth through individuals working secretly, unknown to the rest of the Department outside Sir Arnold himself. Sir Arnold knew how to shut a case up departmentally. None more cunning than he, the wily old schemer. I felt pretty certain that Antrobus was the big noise. I would make myself personally responsible for him whatever happened. The patronage of my new-found friend Jerry Scant afforded me an admirable opportunity to watch all their movements unobserved. The humble gipsy, selling brooms and brushes, could walk up to their very doors and pry amongst their outbuildings unsuspected. The mobile gipsy, free as the air, enemy to convention, suspected by the law, would arouse no suspicion in the cocaine gang. To discover their methods, and, later, to arrest Antrobus would split them like a charge of dynamite in a safe. It would then be merely a matter of collecting the pieces.

Risky? Oh it was risky right enough, but no case is without risk for Sir Arnold Withers and his men. That reminded me of Archie Wemyss. Antrobus had threatened to exterminate him. Sir Arnold must take him off the case at once and arrange for his safety. I had already obtained proof positive that Antrobus would stick at nothing. I asked Sir Arnold to arrange for a body to be washed ashore and

identified as myself. There were ways and means of doing this if properly carried out. The main point was to allow no suspected person to view the body. But I could trust the old fox for that. He could pull so many silent strings and release such powerful forces.

Having concluded my report to Sir Arnold, I wrote a lengthy epistle to Jackson, explaining that, being "dead," I should no longer require his services as butler, and advised him to retire. I knew full well that he would stay somewhere in Pembroke, for nothing on earth could induce him to go away once he knew I was in danger. That he was capable of throwing Antrobus and his crowd off the scent I had not the slightest doubt. When he liked, Jackson could be as impervious as a stone wall. I explained who Jerry Scant was, and smiled as I pictured the meeting between the two—Jackson correct and proper, and Jerry grimly contemptuous—both good fellows in their different lights, but as wide apart as the poles.

CHAPTER V

THE LORE OF THE SMUGGLERS

I NOW had time to reflect upon the probable methods employed by the smugglers to run the contraband into the country. It was quite evident that somehow or other it was being run into either very small harbours or some isolated creek along the coast. Smuggling is a common thing in England, even in these modern times, and most people would be surprised to learn of the extent to which it goes on. But there is a vast difference between the modern smuggler and the smuggler of the bad old days. The modern smuggler prefers to use the recognised ports, and by means of camouflage to bring his goods in right under the noses of the Revenue. But it will be realised that only very small amounts of any commodity can be brought in by this method. Smartly-dressed ladies come over from the Continent wearing several pairs of silk stockings. Cool men, with faces like poker players, pass through the barriers wearing boots with hollow soles and heels, carrying cases with false sides, which spaces are packed with contraband. A large, bulky travelling valise, untidily packed, and containing a medley of the

most uninteresting articles, carries contraband of sorts securely wadded into its large leather handles. All sorts of devices are tried with varying success. But the Customs officers soon get to know the men—and the ladies. It may be that the stuff gets through in this way once or twice, but on the third time it is discovered. Your Customs officer is no Sherlock Holmes, but he possesses a shrewd knowledge of psychology and human nature. A good poker player and a good smuggler can tell a lie without a flicker of an eyelid, but many of them clench their hands when stating they have nothing to declare. The tell-tale fingers nervously tightening as the lie is given are far more eloquent than the carefully disciplined eyes. Sooner or later, then, these are found out. The dice are all loaded against them, and the penalties are heavy.

Antrobus and his gang could not employ such methods as these. The tremendous risk entailed in running through even the smallest quantities would make the game not worth a candle.

No, for Antrobus and his men, the old-fashioned method would be employed. He would run in his cargo like they did in the old days. And, considering things by and large, with considerably more chances of success. The coastguard services have completely altered their functions in the course of years. Primarily formed to prevent the brandy and wine smuggling along the Kent and Sussex coasts, they have developed into a purely life-saving organisation. The liquor trade is so well controlled that it can look

after itself, without the help of the coastguard. In America, where conditions are altogether on a different footing, the rum runners, "bootleggers" are as serious a menace as ever were our old Kent and Sussex smugglers. But there are certain other things which yield a high return for the risks run. Cocaine is one, diamonds another, and one or two more which I will not mention. Your average "bootlegger" is a case-hardened sinner as a rule, and I would not mind laying a hundred to one that Antrobus had served an apprenticeship in that line before turning his genius to bigger things.

That he was a genius can be readily admitted when it is remembered that he was running one of the biggest film producing companies in addition to his smuggling organisation. He was in touch with big men, a figure in the public eye, a man of tremendous wealth, tremendous power. This was the man who had set himself against the forces of the Government and against society, a vast parasite, battening on to the weaknesses of human flesh, dealing in a trade of the devil—that of the corruption of souls. If it had been just ordinary smuggling it would not have been so bad. But cocaine! Ugh!

I visualised him as I had seen him at Fox Pit House with his tinted glasses turning here and there, his ungainly height, his stooping, scholarly shoulders, his thin, nervous hands, twitching and writhing as if he were choking the life out of some poor drug fiend. I thought of his cultured voice, his evident learning, his charm of manner and courtesy, and

contrasted these with the diabolical laugh he gave when glaring down on me in Bull Hole. This man had a dual personality, he was a modern Jekyll and Hyde. My God! What a monster he was when unchained. I recollected that sharp, hard, barking laugh on the top of the cliff, and felt the fear in the voice of his confederate Slinkof, the slant-eyed Russian-American. Slinkof, in appearance, was the toughest one of the whole bunch. His very looks would have condemned him in a dock. A man seemingly without either conscience or fear, yet he had been afraid on the top of the cliff. Afraid of what? Of the sea, the silence, or of Deadman's Bay? Although the combination of these at night produces an eerie effect on some minds I knew it was not these. Of what then was he afraid? Or of whom? If one could have heard that shaky voice as I did they would have known beyond all doubt that he was afraid of his tall companion; of his tinted glasses, and his callous, barking laugh, his scholarly, stooping shoulders and his twitching, talon-like fingers. I had felt Jerry Scant shiver by my side as he heard that laugh, tough Jerry Scant; artful Jerry Scant; clever Jerry Scant, was afraid of that laugh, the laugh which rang out like the bark of a fox.

I forced my attention back to the business in hand. Coastguards and riders were all very well in the old days, when smugglers were comprised of men of the soil, labourers, tradesmen and fishermen. Then, too, they had been more numerous, were strongly armed, and often had pitched battles against the smugglers

on the beach. Those in Kent and Sussex lived in a state of perpetual and unending war. Nowadays the coastguard is at war only with the sea. He does not take life, he saves it. Granted that they report untoward incidents to the Revenue Department, but what earthly chance had one of these sturdy and honest fellows against a guileful man like Antrobus. His very choice of coastline showed that he had considered the scheme right down to the last detail. When it is realised that there was but one coastguard station to one hundred miles of Welsh coast, it will be admitted that Antrobus was taking no unnecessary risks. Oh no! Antrobus could not be trapped by the coastguards. The hawk would not be pulled down by the heron.

So far as I could see, there was one way to trap Antrobus, and that was to keep a close watch on Fox Pit House and its inmates. This was going to be difficult I knew, but it was, for the time being, the best plan I could think of. I might have had him apprehended for attempted murder right away, but to do so would have most likely allowed the main part of the gang to escape. And even then we should be ignorant of his secret. As I had told Sir Arnold Withers, I would make myself responsible for Antrobus when the time came. You may be certain that a man like Antrobus had his bolt-hole. At the least suspicion of an organised raid he would be missing. His position gained him the confidence of highly-placed men. The merest rumour would reach his ears long before the machinery of the law got to work. Then

he would be off, and all we should find would be an empty nest. We might find a few pigeons, but the hawk would be flown.

The daylight had now faded, and night was creeping through the wood. I peered carefully around before emerging from the kiln. Nothing was in sight except trees and grass. No sound disturbed the air except the deceptive grating of a corncrake on the edge of the wood. I stepped outside, and then nearly dropped dead with fright as a voice spoke in my ear.

"'Od rot my pony's fetlocks, pard! You're uncommon venturesome."

It was Jerry Scant, back once more in his silent way, his round face crinkling with malicious enjoyment. I had always prided myself on my woodcraft, and I knew that there was not one man in ten thousand who could have arrived as silently as Jerry Scant. My ear, attuned through long years of hunting to catch the slightest noises, had not heard the merest sound. It was as though a great wingless owl had appeared out of nowhere and dropped down beside me.

"Great Guns, Jerry! But you startled me. I can see I shall have to take a few lessons."

"Ah! but it warn't fair, pard. I've been here half an hour. I heard ye get up and cross the kiln, though to be sure, before that ye were as quiet as a field-mouse."

"But I tip-toed across, Jerry," said I in amazement, "you couldn't have heard me."

"Pard," said Jerry. "In the next few days you are going to learn a thing or two. Do you know that I

can hear a vole move underground when I'm standing still?"

This sounds absolutely incredible, but I saw it demonstrated later with my own eyes. And I take my hat off to Jerry Scant as the greatest hunter I have ever met. Gad! What a big-game hunter he would have made had he the opportunity. I had run across some of the world's best during my travels in Africa. There was old Van Der Spuken, the elephant poacher, who was held to have raided more ivory than any two men living. And "Carrie" Maitland, the district commissioner up Lake Chad way. And Rory O'Haloran the "mad" Irishman who could live longer than any living man in such places as the Kalahari Desert and thrive on it.

But beside Jerry Scant they were amateurs. They had to have an unlimited knowledge of animals and animals' ways, otherwise they would have been "downed," and that in Central Africa means certain death. But Jerry, in addition to knowing all the ways of every living bird and animal in England, knew how to capture them under the watchful eyes of the master of all animals,—man. The risks he ran were prodigious. Granted that life itself was not at stake, but liberty was, and liberty is a very precious thing, especially to such a one as Jerry Scant. He was one of those who, without definitely striving nearly always contrived to wake up in a fresh place. He was a true nomad, a hunter born and bred.

The first thing I did on Jerry's return was to get into the clothes he had brought. When you remember

that all this time I had been masquerading in barely half a suit of clothes borrowed from Jerry's slender extras you will realise that there was no delay in this. When I completed my toilet I surveyed myself approvingly. I laughed at the vagaries of life. A month ago I had strafed my tailor because a lounge suit he had made was a fraction out in the sit of the collar. And now here I was in a suit of clothes I could turn around in without touching the sides. A strong pair of corduroy trousers, a stout pair of clumped boots, a threadbare coat, and a faded overcoat of copperish brown comprised the main part. Surmount this with a dusty bowler hat whose crown had parted from the rim all along one side, put a black patch over one eye, and cover my face with a black stubble called whisker and you will form some idea of what I looked like. My own mother would not have known me. As for Jerry, he sat on a box and laughed until the tears streamed down his face.

"Gawd's strewth, pard! You look smart enough for the Guards, an' no blooming error. We must have his 'photey took and sent to Sporting and Dramatic. Colonel Buster Bill and friend! Haw! Haw! Haw!"

I laughed deep down, for Jerry's mirth was so infectious. I was strangely comforted also, for I had met his type in the war, and one could always rely upon them in a tight corner.

"Now then, pard, we will unpack. I've got a bit of steak and some 'taties to make a fry-up. Nothing like steak for making a man feel solid. Some steak and ale."

So I set to and helped Jerry unpack, and got everything shipshape for the night. Whilst I did this Jerry cooked our supper, and right ravenous did I feel as the pan simmered and bubbled over a wood fire. The stars winked down through the trees, and the owls sounded the death knell of all vermin. The leaping flame cast alternate light and shadow on the face of my companion, and shed a ruddy cherry light around.

"There's only one thing I'm nervous of, pard," said Jerry suddenly. "Ye will have a blanket to-night, but to-morrow night ye'll be lying rough. Can ye stand it, pard?"

"I guess so, Jerry," I replied, "I've shikharied all up and down Africa, and besides had a good spell of the trenches during the war. Fortunately I'm not soft."

"You'll not be soft when you've finished, I'm thinking, I live rough, pard."

"I'll shout if I have enough, Jerry, and it won't be soon."

Jerry looked me all over appraisingly before replying.

"Aye," he said. "I believe you. You are shaping too well for a green 'un. But when ye do feel whacked just say the word, pard. I'll soon find ye easier beds." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder to the kiln. "That's a bonny little crib ain't it?"

I assented, thinking of Bull Hole where I had spent part of the previous night. "It's a palace, Jerry."

So we sat down to our supper, and over it we talked quietly of our future plans. I handed Jerry my

reports, and gave him the most definite instructions as to their disposal. The one superscribed to Sir Arnold Withers he must post at the G.P.O. at Harford. He was not to register it, for fear Antrobus by any means secured a peep at the Registration Book. I was taking no chances where that spectacled gentleman was concerned. The one addressed to my butler he must hand personally to Jackson himself. I left it to him to arrange this as best he could. Jerry was a resourceful fellow, and would undoubtedly fix this in his own particular way. If Jerry wanted to do a thing without his being observed it was a thousand chances to one that he did it.

This meant another journey to Harford to-morrow for Jerry, for I intended to lie low again. It was not a bit of use rushing at things like a bull at a gate. Wiliness must be met with wiliness, and craft with craft. I instructed Jerry to bring me back any news from Jackson, and also to purchase some daily papers, the London ones and the local ones. Also to bring me back all reports flying about regarding my disappearance. Jerry chuckled at this, and I guessed he was thinking how worried Antrobus and his crowd would be until my "dead" body was recovered.

All our plans thus satisfactorily dealt with, Jerry and I lighted our pipes and, facing each other over the dying embers of the fire, swopped experiences. I told him of my wanderings up and down the world, of episodes concerning the time when I was King's Messenger, of Secret Service work in China, and of hunting in Africa.

In return, Jerry told me of weird and wonderful things, of poaching, gun-running and pig-breeding; of services on a Q-boat, of submarine chasing, mine sweeping and—strangest of all—of smuggling.

The time passed thus so rapidly that it was two o'clock or thereabouts before we retired to roost, but I could have listened to old Jerry all night. He was a marvel. I made up my mind there and then that if I came through this venture alive I would take him up to London and introduce him to my club. My club, be it said, was much in the nature of John Buchan's "Runagates." A tale from Jerry Scant would make 'em sit up and take notice. He would be sure of a welcome in that queer collection of good fellows, and that he could hold the floor I had no doubt.

And so to bed with an easy conscience, to sleep as soundly as if in a ship's bunk, that most soothing of all beds.

CHAPTER VI

"OF DREADFUL DEATH AND THINGS UNKNOWN"

I AWOKE in the morning with a keen feeling for work. It is a curious thing that on some mornings I awake with the feeling that I could shift a mountain, whilst on others I want all the work done for me and to remain an idle onlooker. Once started on the bad mornings this feeling of idleness disappears, but, all the same, I know in my inmost mind that on the good mornings my work is twice as good. I put this down to the fact that our modern life is too strenuous mentally, as any form of physical exercise is preferable to the solving of abstruse problems. It is therefore an attitude of mind, not of body, for the body is far more ready to take up work than the mind. But give me the mornings when a man wakes with mind and body perfectly attuned. Then all goes merrily, and the stiffer the problem the better.

It was therefore to one of my good mornings that I awoke, and I felt that I was equal to downing two fellows with blue tinted spectacles.

Jerry departed for Harford immediately after breakfast, and such is the cussedness of life that on one of my good mornings I had to retire into a dark and dingy hole and shut myself up like a hermit crab.

But unknown to me, fate was arranging a pretty busy programme for a man who proposed being idle. I suppose it must have been an hour or so after midday when I caught the sound of voices. At the very first sound I started up in alarm for I caught the unmistakable tones of Celia Ferlie. I crouched in my dark hole listening. For awhile I could not place the owner of the other voice, a masculine one. I racked my brains to remember when I had heard it before. That it belonged to one of the Fox Pit House party I felt certain. But who? I ran over the members in my mind but at first I could not reconcile it to any particular one. It was rather an affected voice with a faint slurring of r's.

An occasional twig snapped under careless feet and a covey of long-tailed tits swept over the quarry, darting from tree to tree and protesting with minute squeaks. The voices came nearer and there was a laugh from the man; a soft chuckling laugh that had a queer note of power in it, as though the owner held something in reserve, but was afraid to let himself go.

Got it! This was the voice of the actor who styled himself El Draco, the man who I instinctively disliked. As I have already explained there was something feminine about his looks, call it a certain prettiness, a glow of the eye, a softness of contour, pleasing but strangely sinister. But underneath this outward grace there lay something that was dominantly arrogantly masculine. One of the "proprietary" sort of men, that my feet always itch to kick in the seat of their trousers.

What the devil Celia was doing with this man in a wood alone I failed utterly to understand. Surely she could read his type? She would have done in the old days when I was in khaki, that I would wager. But she was a different Celia now; harder, more cynical, more polished, more independent. The very first words of the actor's which I heard bore out exactly my opinion of him and made my blood boil.

"My dear Celia," he laughed patronisingly, "you really must allow one of experience to contradict you."

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" This was the old Celia, and I smiled to myself approvingly, but next moment was seething with indignation as I listened to El Draco.

"My sweet and altogether charming little tigress, will you bow to superior knowledge. Antrobus, I repeat, has no artistic talent, he is commercially-minded only."

"Pish! Tommy rot!" This from Celia.

El Draco laughed, a nasty amused sort of laugh, cynically detached and altogether beastly. It was as much as I could do to prevent myself leaping out and kicking him headlong out of the wood.

"My dear child! How often must I remind you that insult is not argument. I reiterate that Antrobus is a genius for organisation, but he has not the soul of a wood-louse."

Would Celia stand this I wondered, and listened carefully for her reply. In the old days I felt certain that it would have been a sound box on the ear. Instead she laughed, half regretfully.

"I suppose you actors cannot help disparaging the other man, but you really must allow me my opinion of Mr. Antrobus. I think that he has an abnormal sense of artistry, and that if he turned to acting he could beat you all, the great El Draco included."

This then was how the land lay. Celia was mad on acting. She had thrown herself heart and soul into the work, and was an enthusiast. Both Antrobus, the great producer, and El Draco, the great actor, must have been looked up to by her as the masters of their craft.

El Draco laughed, but this time there was annoyance in his laugh. Celia had evidently touched a raw spot. His voice, when he replied, had a touch of asperity in it. The dignity of the actor was wounded. His vanity was touched.

"Would it surprise you to learn, Celia, that Antrobus really doesn't care a property cup and saucer about producing, let alone acting."

I strained my ears to catch every word. The speakers had passed by my place of concealment at a distance and were now getting out of earshot. I could just catch Celia's "What on earth do you mean?" and a half sneering, half nervous, laugh from El Draco, but his reply was unintelligible.

In a flash my mind was made up. Somehow or other I must overhear more of this conversation. As I put it, it looked as if, in his jealousy, El Draco would be indiscreet. Maybe he would say a little too much. Even to Celia such disclosures would be dangerous, and I guessed that El Draco had

realised it when he laughed that half sneering, half nervous, laugh. Antrobus had a way of dealing with people that were—"superfluous," or—"in the way."

Before I left I had a sudden inspiration. In case of my being detected I should need a plausible excuse for being in the wood. On the shelf lay a tangled mass of rabbit wires. Excellent! A tramp setting snares. Against the law, but quite harmless. Stuffing some of them in my pockets I carefully parted the bushes and looked cautiously around. No one in sight. Noiselessly I stepped out, my hunter's blood a-tingle. I had not proceeded very far before I found myself in a tangle of undergrowth. Brambles tore at my clothes and branches whipped across my face. Presently, however, the bracken and brambles cleared and the trees thinned out. The ground sloped sharply downwards and through the trees I could see the open country. At the same time I caught sight of Celia and El Draco walking towards me at the edge of the wood. They had left by a small gate further down, and were now in a kind of parkland. Evidently we were on some biggish estate, but although I peered to left and right I could see no sign of the house. I crouched behind a thicket of bracken and wormed my way right into it so that I could look down on them as they passed. Cautiously peering between the stems I strove to take a good look at El Draco, but drew back quickly for trotting along at Celia's side was the huge Alsatian, Skomer. This meant that I should have to use double caution if I wished

to get near enough to overhear their talk. Celia stopped and pointed.

"There it is, El Draco," she said. "Isn't it a beauty? It is the biggest I have seen."

Following the direction of her arm, I saw, right on the edge of the wood, an unusually large cromlech. In spite of the seriousness of my position I smiled to myself at the very thought of the irresponsible Celia being interested in such antiquarian things as cromlechs. I noticed that El Draco carried a camera, and I surmised that this interest in cromlechs was in some way or other connected with their film work. A sort of spur ran round the far side of it, a protecting wooded arm as it were, and I thought that by a careful approach I might gain this unseen. Silently I backed out of the thicket and getting behind a fold in the ground ran swiftly to the base of the spur. Then working my way along the far side of the ridge I came to a place directly overlooking the cromlech. As good luck would have it a thick clump of brambles practically hung over the site and into this I wriggled and was comfortably ensconced before they arrived. For the first ten minutes or so after their arrival their talk was of purely technical matters, and El Draco took several snaps of the cromlech from various positions.

It was Celia who re-opened the line of the original conversation.

"I have been wondering, El Draco, how you can say that Antrobus is commercially-minded only. Surely his productions prove otherwise."

El Draco laughed shortly.

"I perceive, charming one, that you imagine Antrobus to be bound up in this film work in the same way as we are."

Celia's head went up challengingly.

"Well. Isn't he?"

El Draco did not reply at once. Instead he regarded her speculatively, as if wondering whether he dare. A look crossed his face, as if he had made up his mind to test his companion.

"Wait until you are older, my child; a little more —er—sophisticated."

"Thank you," flashed Celia, "I object to your sophistry in any case."

I watched El Draco, for I felt convinced he was about to make a disclosure of sorts.

"Ah!" he sighed, leisurely extracting his cigarette case. "Our latest recruit is so—er—Victorian that she would object to my taking drugs. What?"

Celia was watching him with just a suspicion of alarm. Slowly El Draco selected a cigarette, and, with deliberate insolence, broke it in two and held up a small white pellet about the size of a pea.

"Wait," he said, "until you have lived so hard that you resort to this."

He slipped the pellet into his mouth, Celia watching him with horror-struck eyes. I thanked the Lord that one of her idols was shattered anyway.

"You don't mean to tell me, El Draco, that you are a drug fiend."

The actor smiled deprecatingly. "Oh, not a fiend I assure you. Just a little—er—aberration shall we say."

His cheeks were flushed, and his eyes unnaturally bright. He laughed with an exultant little catch in his voice. I felt my gorge rise at the look in the fellow's eyes. I could read his intention as plainly as if it were written in letters of fire across his face. His laugh grew even more unsteady, and he edged closer to Celia. "But, charming one, there is no thrill on earth like plucking forbidden fruit." With that he leapt, arms outstretched, and next instant Celia would have been in his grasp. What happened then was almost too quick for the human eye to follow. As he leapt Celia gave an urgent cry.

"Skomer!"

I had clean forgotten the dog until I saw a long, dark torpedo body hurl itself across ten feet of ground and rise straight as an arrow to El Draco's throat. Man and dog went down in a flurry, and I heard El Draco scream for help.

The events of the last few moments had caused me to forget my caution, and in my anxiety for Celia's safety I pressed too far forward on the fragile screen of brambles, and bursting through fell headlong down the bank. As I picked myself up I saw Celia standing white-faced over the dog, with one small firm hand on its collar. El Draco lay moaning, his face covered with blood, and for a moment I thought he was finished. But presently he struggled to his feet and stood swaying dizzily, his glassy eyes fixed on the

dog. The Alsatian crouched menacingly, a ridge of fur standing up all along its back from neck to tail.

It was several seconds before either of them saw me. Celia was too much occupied in keeping the dog under control, whilst El Draco and the Alsatian had no eyes but for each other.

By this time I had collected my wits.

"What's the trouble, mister?" I whined.

Celia and El Draco looked around, startled, and the dog rumbled like muttering thunder. But although the dog was hostile I sensed that he would not fly at me as he had done at El Draco.

I thought it best to play up to El Draco, although I felt like finishing the work the dog had begun. Dissension in the camp is always useful—to the other side—and, properly engineered, I might, at some future date, be able to make use of El Draco. So I cast lowering looks on the dog, and backed away as if frightened.

"Keep 'old of him, lady," I croaked. "He ain't safe. Thought I heard somebody shouting for help. Did 'e attack yer, sir?" I asked.

El Draco mumbled something unintelligible in reply, but a crashing in the wood attracted my attention. Looking over my shoulder, I saw the huge Nubian clear the hedge like a deer. On catching sight of us standing by the cromlech he dropped his right hand into the pocket of his uniform and sauntered up coolly.

"All right heah, suh?" he asked, indicating me with an inclination of his bullet head.

Celia then spoke.

"Yes. He is only a tramp who happened along. But all is not right there," with a contemptuous wave towards El Draco.

The negro's eyes rolled from one to the other uncomprehendingly, then he came over to me and, putting his two massive hands on my shoulders, he squeezed until his finger joints cracked. "Heah, you low guy," he said, "beat it. Beat it quick!"

"Here what's the game," I shouted. "Keep your dirty paws off me." I peered around his vast bulk at El Draco. "Wot's the game, guv'nor? Is he goin' for to attack yer like the dog?"

El Draco pulled himself together. "Send him packing," he snarled, "I don't want strangers around here." A sudden suspicion shot into his face. "Hold! Wait a minute! How the devil did he get here anyway, and what's he doing?"

The negro's grip tightened, and he shook me like a terrier shakes a rat. My arms were absolutely paralysed in that tremendous grasp.

El Draco came over and peered out of bloodshot eyes into my face. Now or never my disguise would stand, for El Draco, by reason of his profession, knew all the secrets of make up.

For the space of a minute we stared at each other while I asked him sarcastically what sort of a sanguinary game he thought he was playing. Then I changed my tune and whined.

"Heard you cry for help, guv'nor. As I was climbing into the wood. Saw you on the ground with

that awful animal worrying yer. Keep a 'old of it, lady, and let me go. Poor old Nobby ain't never harmed nobody."

Out of the tail of my eye I saw Celia looking on in obvious bewilderment. This phase of the game was lost on her entirely.

El Draco slipped his hand into my right hand pocket and brought out a couple of rabbit wires.

"They ain't mine, sir," I whined, "I swear they ain't mine. I found them on the edge of the wood. Old Nobby don't snare rabbits. I ain't never been here before, sir, I ain't. S'welp me Gawd! I ain't. Lost me way I——"

"Bah! I don't care if you snare all the rabbits in creation. Send him off. Panda. He is only a poacher!"

"I ain't a poacher, sir. Take my oath I ain't a poacher——"

"Beat it!" ejaculated the negro. "Beat it quick or I'll bash yose face in."

As soon as I was loosed from that terrible grip I hobbled away as fast as I could, looking back over my shoulder and muttering nonsense about blasted aristocrats. But I can tell you half the apparent alarm was not assumed, for had that negro the faintest suspicion as to who he held in his grasp he would have throttled my life out without mercy. I shuddered as I remembered the whites of his eyes, bleared like old ivory, his squat, broad nose, his thick cruel lips, and his huge white teeth. And El Draco, staring hard at me, as merciless as the gaze of a snake.

But as I drew away I reckoned that his was the greater terror. That episode of his would take a lot of explaining away. Quite how he would wriggle out of it I knew not. He would undoubtedly blame his madness on the drug, but what if Antrobus read treachery into his action. Antrobus, in spite of his tinted spectacles, was a remarkably far-sighted man, and a ruthless one into the bargain.

Coincident with this thought came another which turned me cold. El Draco might try to get rid of Celia to save his own skin. I was by now out of sight of the people by the cromlech. Somehow or other I must keep an eye on Celia. It would be doubly dangerous, but in spite of the risk of discovery, which would mean the falling through of my carefully laid plans, if not the loss of life itself, I felt that to desert her now at such a stage would be criminal cowardice. But there was so much at stake besides my life that I hesitated a while. Could I with honour risk our cause? On the other hand, could I with honour leave her?

With no fixed plan in mind I turned back. Carefully dodging from tree to tree I came once more to the spur, and breathed a sigh of relief as I peeped through the bracken. Celia, the Nubian and the dog were retreating in the distance, whilst leaning against the cromlech was El Draco, white of face and evidently in a pitiable funk.

"Fool," he ground out between his clenched teeth, "damned idiotic fool. I've absolutely damned myself."

It was evident that he was not going to risk facing Antrobus, at least just yet.

I tried to put myself in his shoes, considering dispassionately what I should do. Knowing Antrobus even as I did on short acquaintance, I realised that to return would be putting one's head into the lion's mouth. It all depended, of course, on just how much or how little Celia told Antrobus.

The best thing for El Draco, I concluded, was to fly, and that as quickly as possible. But try as I might I could see no object in his late madness. He must have known of the consequences. Or did he for one moment expect that he could have enjoined Celia to silence. That was unthinkable! He was still muttering to himself, and presently I began to get a glimmering.

"Antrobus will have her now, curse him. Oh! Blind jealous fool. But I'll give him away, damn him. I'll give him away before he can act. He and his big Irish friends. I'll wreck the whole concern before I'll go under."

The influence of the drug, combined with his fright, had caused him to fall to pieces. He maundered and muttered like a drunken man. As for me I strained every nerve to hear all that he was saying, but could gather little else but a confused mention of motor boats, luminous paint, and the man called Kelly.

Once I was sorely tempted to go down and disclose my identity, and force the truth out of him. But I decided the risk would be too great. Men of his type, when actually confronted, can shut up like an oyster,

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and I should gain nothing, whilst it would be known that I was still alive. As matters turned out, I was profoundly thankful that I kept still.

For some time he continued talking to himself in a maudlin voice then, lurching forward, he made off along the edge of the wood with halting, uneven steps. It was as pitiable a state of blue funk and nerves that I had ever seen in my life. It bore out to the letter the truth of an observation made by an old doctor friend of mine. "Your drug taker can renew his energy by drugs up to a point. That is the breaking point. When that is reached the collapse is complete."

Well, El Draco had collapsed right enough. He was a very different man to the insolently domineering coxcomb who had posed in front of Celia on the way in.

I watched his meandering figure out of sight, then rolled over on my back and lay looking up at the sky. Any casual wanderer would have taken me for a tramp dozing away a pleasant summer afternoon. But they would have been surprised had they known that the supposed tramp was racking his brains to discover the connection between luminous paint and a man named Kelly, and trying to fit them all in with the *Mabinogion*.

It was close on ten o'clock when Jerry arrived back from Harford. I had by then retired to the kiln, and although I strained every nerve to catch the faintest whisper of Jerry's return I did not hear the faintest sound. His pony was as silent and

surefooted as himself. The wheels of his long, narrow cart were so well greased that they turned as noiselessly as a spoon through honey. They made no sound rolling over the smooth green turf of the drive.

Leaving his cart on the drive, Jerry walked over to the kiln, and after frightening me out of my life by thrusting his red face silently through the foliage to within a foot of mine, he came in all smiles.

"Secured an interview with your butler, pard. Haw! Haw! Haw! Had to give 'im a damn good sock in the eye first though. Haw! Haw! Haw!"

I gasped. "A sock in the eye, Jerry? What do you mean?"

"Haw! Haw! Yes! A hell of a sock. 'E ain't 'arf got a mince pie, all purple and black it is, and fast going red around the edges. A beauty, a real beaut——"

"Come on, Jerry, out with it," said I, but I might just as well have tried to hurry a glazier.

"But 'e's a sportsman, pard. A real hard nut, for all his pasty face and gentle ways. Look at this!"

He turned his face to one side, displaying a long, ugly weal running from cheek-bone to chin.

"A fraction and 'e would have cut me eye right out. A blow in a thousand. Oh 'e's a sportsman all right."

Jerry grinned at my bewildered face.

"You said secure an interview with him as wouldn't arose suspicion. So I tried to steal his watch. Haw! Haw! Haw!

"Only in fun, mind you, pard, only in fun, but gawdstrewth, pard, talk about fireworks. It was a damned good job it wasn't a real job, or I should be cooling my heels in Harford jail just now."

I smiled grimly, for I scented some of Jackson's humour behind all this.

"I bumped up against him, pard, and laid me hands on his watch, and as he came at me I whispered that I had a message from you. He stopped then, and that's when I blacked his eye. An' would you believe, pard, all he did was to wink the other an' tell me to keep it up. I likes a fight now and again, but I bar howling raving berserk fellows that call 'emselves butlers. As I struggled with him I managed to get your letter into his pocket, and that's when he gave me this. Then up comes a police constable an' he gives me in charge. Oh, he's a dandy chap. There's no flies on him, for in the crowd around us I saw the little short bloke that was on top of the cliffs the other night. Bet he didn't get a smell as to what we did. Bet he didn't get the merest whiff. Flask o' rum to a daisy 'e didn't get the merest whiff. Two flasks o' rum——"

"Righto, Jerry." My eyes gleamed. They were evidently shadowing Jackson. But I knew they would get nothing out of that blank-wall individual. I wondered if Jackson had actually been approached, and whether he had any idea of who was shadowing him. He would when he had read my letter anyway.

"Oh, 'e's a sportsman, pard. He took all I could give him smiling and gave quite as much as I wanted.

Then he came around at night and said he wanted to withdraw his charge. Gave me half-a-crown to help me on my way, and also this little note, pard. Oh, 'e's an artful old scoundrel, that butler of yours."

I took the note and read it carefully. Jackson first reported that he had noted all my instructions, then went on to say that he had been shadowed by several persons, but that he could not place them until he had received a letter. He had received a visit from a film actress, Viola Calmon, who had posed as a friend of mine. She said that she had met me at Fox Pit Hall, and that she had omitted to take my address. Would he send a note along to me? He had sent it to the Goat's Horns Inn, St. David's. Had been anxious at my silence. Was writing and wiring to H.Q. wild messages about fearing foul play. Would request local police force to try to trace me, and, in fact, was behaving generally as a confidential servant might be expected to behave. Oh, Jackson was a deep one, deep as Machiavelli.

I congratulated Jerry on getting the message across to Jackson, for with Jackson being shadowed this was evidently a tough proposition. But it had been managed successfully, if with somewhat painful results to both parties.

I could imagine Jackson fuming over his black eye. He was a man always fastidious as to his appearance. Quite unintentionally he would now be a recluse until it was healed. This, of course, suited our

plans very well, and I could reckon on Jackson prolonging this seclusion. So much for Jackson's end.

Over our supper that night I related to Jerry all that had transpired in the day. He sat pulling at a pipe which gurgled, the leaping flames of the camp fire lighting up his fierce face. I began to have a deeper feeling of respect for the brains of this man of the heath. Where I expected simplicity I had discovered subtlety. His was one of the first-class brains which, as well as seeing the broad outlines of things, grasped the details also. His keen brown eyes roved over my face.

"Say, pard. Who is this Lady Celia Ferlie?"

I started, for the question was so sudden. But I told him who she was, and added that I had known her in her schooldays.

"What is Antrobus to her, pard?"

I flushed angrily, but Jerry's brown eyes were fixed on mine in a hard look of inquiry.

"Come, pard," he repeated, "just what is he to her?"

In spite of myself my anger rose.

"What the devil do you mean, Scant," I shot out. "What the devil do you mean by what is that fiend to her?"

Jerry smiled grimly. "Easy now, pard, easy now. I can see what she is to you."

I jumped to my feet, and Jerry rose also so hat we faced one another across the fire.

"Look here——" I began angrily, but was unceremoniously cut short by Jerry's fierce voice.

"Oh, stow it! Stow it, pard, do you hear? And tell me this. How did she come to meet you on Oldgale Sands?"

The question took me like a blow between the eyes.

"Good God, Jerry!" I said hoarsely, "I see what you mean."

I recollected a certain statement that Antrobus had made in the car. "We had you watched in Denby." It was perfectly clear to me, then, that I had been deliberately decoyed into Fox Pit Hall, and Celia had been sent to fetch me.

I sat down, my head on the palms of my hands, staring into the fire. This was a regular facer. Jerry sat down opposite me.

I suppose in the back of my mind that the question had been revolving ever since I had lain bruised and battered in Bull Hole. But I had never really faced it fair and square. And it had been left for Jerry Scant, artful Jerry Scant, to bring me right up against it with no way around the corners.

Why had she met me on Oldgale Sands? Could it have been pure coincidence? If so, it was really most astounding. Yet I swear that she had been most natural. But then she was an actress. But Celia? It was impossible. Absolutely impossible!

Jerry must have divined my thoughts.

"You can never tell with a woman, pard. They are the devil! Even the good 'uns are as deep as Hades. I tell you, you don't know where you are with them. One minute you think you are on firm ground, then next minute they kick it from under

you, and you are struggling in deep water. They are a rum mysterious lot of tigers with petticoats on. Blast 'em!"

He removed his pipe and spat in the fire contemptuously, but, watching him closely, I saw one brown eye fixed upon me somewhat wistfully. But the other came around hard and truculent.

"Yes! Blast 'em! That's what I says."

I was about to make some reply when I saw Jerry's head lift like a hound's. The pupils of his eyes distended, and his nostrils quivered.

"Hist, pard! Someone's come in the wood at the far end."

It was the finest example of woodcraft I had ever seen in my life. I had not heard the slightest sound and, strain my ears as I would, I could hear nothing. Yet Jerry sat absolutely as certain as if he had seen someone come in. It was uncanny, Jerry's head moved slowly around, and he stared hard into the depths of the wood. Night had fallen thick and dark. Heavy clouds had driven up from the west just before sunset, and there was no moon.

Jerry's raised fingers enjoined silence.

Presently I caught the sound of rustling leaves and an occasional twig snapped underfoot. I nodded my head to show that I had caught it. But over Jerry's face had come a puzzled look which gradually gave place to alarm.

"Queer!" he whispered. "Damned queer. There's something wrong here, pard."

His alarm conveyed itself in some subtle fashion to me. There was something sinister to Jerry's trained ears about that slow rustling of leaves and breaking of twigs. Something out of the ordinary.

Jerry got up swiftly and beckoned me to follow him.

"Go lightly, pard!" he whispered. "Tread where I tread."

Silently, dreading I knew not what, I followed Jerry Scant, finding opportunity to marvel anew at his perfect woodcraft. Never hurrying, yet never stopping, he moved as the deer moves, silent as a wraith, choosing his way with dainty carelessness. Following him, I found that I touched the lightest of branches only, never came against any obstruction, never had to stoop under awkward boughs, and the dry twigs underfoot seemed curiously few. We walked as the deer walk, in single file, and it seemed as if we walked along some old track, yet I could sense that we struck right through the heart of the wood. Presently the sound of the someone moving through the wood came nearer. Falling flat down behind a patch of bramble, Jerry pulled me down alongside.

"Coming directly this way. Lie close! Lie still!"

As bad luck would have it the moon shone out from behind a bank of cloud, shedding a ghostly glimmer through the wood.

"Lie still, pard. Something queer here. Damn queer!"

I felt a pricking up and down my spine. I feared that which would come looming up through the wood.

I believe Jerry felt this, too, for his hand clasped my forearm tightly. Nearer and nearer came the slow rustling of leaves and crashing branches. Nearer and nearer, until it resolved itself into uncertain, dragging footsteps. I felt my hair lift. There was something devilish about this dragging step. It was uncanny, almost, I might say, inhuman. I could have shouted aloud. Jerry's grasp tightened, and his face shone strangely white.

"Damn queer, pard," he whispered hoarsely. "There's something coming I don't understand."

I felt my face grow rigid as the muscles tightened in nervous strain. I could see the whites of Jerry's large knuckles shining with an almost luminous effect. It was a cool night yet the sweat ran off my brow in streams.

Nearer and nearer came the dragging footsteps, and a black shadow loomed suddenly up from behind a tree. Between us and it was a little clearing bounded by the bushes behind which we lay. Into this clearing stepped a man, and with a thrill I recognised El Draco. But my God! what a difference! A shaft of moonlight, falling directly on him, showed his face twisted in awful horror. But the most terrible part was the way in which he moved. It was as though his limbs were controlled by invisible wires, and pulled by the hands of a manipulator.

Jerry's grip was literally crushing my arm, and I heard his breath coming short and sharp.

Abruptly El Draco stopped, and a fiendish peal of laughter bubbled forth from his lips.

"Curse you! Curse you, Antrobus. I'll beat you yet!"

His right hand moved jerkily up to his mouth, and with automaton-like movements he swallowed the contents of a small phial.

"Curse you, you fiend, curse——" The ravings ended in a shrill and awful scream of agony, and his body literally sprang into the air and was bent like the blade of a sickle. It fell to the ground and lay stiff and still, so dreadfully stiff and still.

"Merciful God!" muttered Jerry. "Merciful God!"

His grasp had relaxed, leaving my arm numbed.

My face and neck were in a bath of perspiration, and as for Jerry, he was trembling like a badly-frightened horse.

I made as if to go to the corpse, but Jerry laid on me a heavy restraining hand.

"Don't go," he whispered. "Lie still. Someone at edge of wood on left."

Astounded, I obeyed his instructions, and presently caught the sound of someone moving. But with what a difference. This prowler moved lightly and quickly, and yet withal moved with a curiously sinister significance. Nearer came these steps, until I thought that someone else would soon step into the clearing, but presently they stopped, and, peering hard through the trees on the far side, I thought I distinguished a shadow. Scarce daring to breathe, I peered between the brambles, striving to pierce the gloom. Jerry lay rigid, almost as if he had been struck into a trance by the sheer horror of the scene

we had witnessed. Presently the dark shadow moved, but I could catch no sound. It loomed blacker, and I realised that someone was approaching the clearing with extreme caution. A flying scud of cloud was passing under the moon, so that one moment the wood was inky black and next filled with a purplish dusk. A heavier cloud than usual obscured the moon, and when it passed and the light filtered gradually back, I almost cried aloud. A long, narrow face peered out of the darkness on the opposite side of the small clearing, a face so high above the ground that it appeared to hang suspended. The mouth seemed to be set in a cruelly mocking smile, whilst under a wide-brimmed hat I could just distinguish the glint of spectacles. For the space of a minute there was a dead silence, then the thin lips parted and a harsh barking laugh rang out; a harsh grating laugh which chilled the blood; triumphant and contemptuous, sharp as the bark of a fox. In the distance an owl screeched, and an eerie gust of cold wind came like an evil breath through the wood. I felt Jerry quivering uncontrollably and laid my hand on his arm. When I looked again the face had disappeared.

Jerry had somewhat recovered his nerve. Softly he whispered in my ear.

"Keep still, pard, until I give you the all clear."

For a while we remained still as dormice, listening to the sounds made by Antrobus retreating. It was quite a quarter of an hour before Jerry deemed it safe to move. Then, without any attempt at caution,

he stood up. I followed suit, and immediately stepped into the clearing.

"For the love of Mike, pard," gasped Jerry, "don't go in there. Come away, pard. Jerry Scant has had enough of this."

"Must see whether he is dead, Jerry," I replied.

"Humph!" he grunted, "he's dead right enough. I shall hear his blasted death yell in my ears this many a night. Come on, pard. Come away!"

Without replying I stooped down over the body and felt the heart. As I anticipated, El Draco was dead. Acute rigor had already set in, for the body was as stiff as a board. Bending down I sniffed gently, and caught a faint but unmistakable odour which carried my mind back to my African travels. For the odour was that of a deadly poison employed by the witch doctors of an almost unheard-of tribe. I wondered what on earth the local doctor would make of a post-mortem, and chuckled grimly.

"Come on, pard! Come on, or you and I'll dissolve partnership. I can't stand this any longer."

"Righto, Jerry my lad," I replied. "I'll tell you something that will startle you presently. We will go and get some sleep now, but I want to come along to-morrow morning before anyone gets about. I have a little theory to test."

"No objection to your looking at him in the daylight, pard, but how you can stand there looking into his awful twisted dial by moonlight, beats me."

So we left that place of horror, silently, each busy with his own thoughts. What Jerry's were I had

no idea, but I could see that even his iron nerve was upset. Against known dangers he went gladly, and I knew that he was a brave man. But this dreadful death was an unknown terror, to him, and he was up against something out of his ken. To me, however, although the death of El Draco was a dreadful thing to look upon, it did not affect me quite so badly as Jerry, because I had seen something very much like it down in Lower Sudan.

CHAPTER VII

"A CUP OF TEA"

We passed a fitful night in the kiln. Jerry kept waking me by starting violently in his sleep. Poor chap, the scene we had just lived through must have tried his nerves to the utmost limit. At the earliest flicker of dawn he got up, and, going outside, lighted a fire. Very soon he was whistling cheerily, and by the time he had breakfast ready he was his usual self.

I went outside and joined him.

"Morning, pard," he said. We change our address to-day."

I looked at him questioningly.

"Thought you might like a little sea air after last night, pard. 'Strewth! But that bloke died hard, didn't he?"

"Pretty bad, Jerry," I replied, "but why shift our quarters? We are safe enough here, surely, and not far from Fox Pit House."

"That's the trouble, pard. We are not far enough. That is to say, you ain't. After last night I want to keep as far away from that lanky, spectacled gent as I can possibly be."

I was seized with a sudden thought. In my eagerness to pursue my quest I had overlooked the fact that I was probably endangering Jerry Scant's life.

"Look here, Jerry," I said, "if you like to cry off right now, we will separate. I think I can manage on my own now. You have been very good."

Jerry Scant's honest brown eyes grew dark with anger.

"Huh!" he spat out. "D'ye think I'm a flaming quitter. By dam! I tell you that I've seen men die worse deaths than that crittur, Draco, as you calls 'un. Aye, a lot worser'n that. Besides what some as I've seen, he jus' dropped into a trance as 'twere. A gentle trance. An' let me tell you this, pard. Jerry Scant ain't afraid to cock his toes up in any way you can think of when his time comes. I guess they're all middlin' painful, but not nearly so bad as having a tooth out, after all."

I laughed. The idea of comparing death with toothache was a new one to me.

"Righto, Jerry," I said. "Together we will see this through, but I warn you it is going to be a damned dangerous business."

"So is poaching a pheasant," says Jerry, "but say, pard, isn't it glorious to be picking his bones?"

Chuckling, I sat down to breakfast, over which Jerry told me of his idea to work around the country and finish up to-night at an old and disused barn which, according to him, stood just outside the confines of Fox Pit House.

"Ye see, pard," he explained, "we can't stay more than one or two nights in any one place. It ain't like Jerry Scant to do so, and if I change my habits it will arouse suspicion. It's bad enough having you along with me, but it ain't the first mate I've had. I'm a lone hand as I told ye, but occasionally I helps a lame dog over a stile. Last winter I took poor old Ben Davis, the scissor grinder, for three months. He was on his last legs when I found 'un though, and he died in the infirmary in May. But Jerry Scant can't stay in one place, so we will have to choose a little circle of places all around the blooming peninsula and keep moving."

"Good idea, Jerry," said I. "You are cut out for this kind of work I can see."

Jerry flushed at the compliment, and then startled me by letting out one of his crackling machine gun laughs.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" he roared. "We will be dodging all around old Antrobus like a couple of wasps around a beer pot. And if I don't sting him before I goes under my name won't be Scant."

As soon as breakfast was over we set out through the wood towards the fateful glade.

The body was exactly in the same attitude as we left it.

"Now then, Jerry," I said, "you stay at the edge of the clearing and listen for all you are worth. I don't want to be interrupted. My examination will not take thirty seconds if I am right in my supposition."

Carefully choosing the hard ground so as to leave no footprints in the clearing I walked over to the corpse. Bending down I examined both wrists exactly at the base of the palm. On the left wrist was what I expected to find, a small bluish mark exactly like that left by the prick of a thorn. With the tremendous quantity of poison in the dead man's stomach, and an empty bottle in one clenched hand, no medical man would give this small scratch a second's thought. It could be easily caused by a thorn piercing the skin by some mischance.

As a matter of fact it was caused by a thorn piercing the skin. But not by any mischance. For the thorn which had caused this slight prick had been covered with a subtle poison, the faint smell of which I had caught last night. By now this had entirely disappeared, and the only poison contained in the dead body would be that which the bottle had held. What this was I did not trouble to find out. The dead man had swallowed it in an act which looked like suicide. But by that little prick at the base of the hand I knew, as well as if I had seen the operation, that El Draco had been murdered.

The poison introduced by the thorn had one outstanding peculiarity. It, of itself, did not kill, but it placed the subject absolutely and completely in control of the administrator. El Draco, as soon as he had been pricked deliberately with that murderous thorn, had become the slave of Antrobus, body and mind. He could do only that which Antrobus willed. Reconstructing the probable sequence of events, I

knew that Antrobus had brought his victim to the edge of the wood, given him the bottle of poison, and had willed him to make away with himself. It was ghastly, and, of course, unbelievable. Only I had once seen an almost similar thing carried out by a medicine man of an almost unknown tribe of savages in the Lower Sudan. But until El Draco had raised his hand I had no idea that I was witnessing a parallel. Then it was too late. El Draco, to all intents and purposes, was in exactly the same state as a mesmerised subject. He had no will, no power of his own. Even his movements were under the control of an outside force.

A sudden thought came into my head. Swiftly I felt in the dead man's pockets. In the right hand coat pocket was a letter, or rather a confession written on a plain sheet of paper. It was headed with all the flamboyance of a world's favourite actor.

"To all the Cinema-going world.

"I have done this thing because I have become a slave to drugs.

"I have no friends, no relatives, but to one, Antrobus, who tried his level best to save me from myself I would say please forgive me.

"*Sic transit*——

"El Draco."

I folded the missive and placed it back in the dead man's pocket. A feeling of utter revulsion had come over me. Forgetting all caution, I hurried from the

place. The devilish ingenuity of it made me cold. What hopes had we to pierce the schemes of such deadly efficiency, as soulless as a machine.

Jerry's cheery voice revived me like a cold douche.

"Head up, pard! I guess it's pretty bad, but you and I together'll make rings round the dirty swabs. They won't frighten your humble a second time."

"My God, Jerry," I whispered, "Antrobus is a devil."

Jerry jerked his head towards the dreadful form in the glade. "I don't care a tinker's curse if he's old Beelzebub himself. If 'e's responsible for that poor crittur's death, and in such a way, I'll knock all the hell out of him when my turn comes, and it will come, pard, it will come right enough. You mark my words, we will be top dogs at the end o' this scrap. Bet a flask of rum to a sea-pink it'll come. Bet two flasks of rum to a sea-pink it'll come. I'll bet a hundred——"

"Righto, Jerry," I cut in, "I'm OK. again now. We will beat 'em yet."

Jerry beamed. "That's the spirit, pard!" Then he grew solemn. "What are we going to do about that?" He inclined his head to the still and sightless form in the glade.

I thought rapidly. "Look here, Jerry," I said, "this is how I figure it out. Antrobus has so arranged this that it looks for all the world like suicide. Even to us who saw everything it looked like suicide. I will tell you how it was arranged later on. I guess that, feeling absolutely secure, Antrobus will arrange

for that corpse to be found pretty soon. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see some of his party here later on, with, perhaps, a policeman or two. You see, Jerry, there's a letter written by the dead man to the effect that he took his own life."

Jerry gasped. "'Strewth, pard! No wonder you looked queer."

"I think we had better clear out pretty quick," I went on. "Personally I don't think we need worry about leaving footmarks behind. Antrobus and his crowd will be all over the place. That's what I should arrange if I were Antrobus, anyway. When in doubt you can often get a lead by putting yourself in the other man's shoes. Antrobus will cover up his own tracks, I should say, by being here in person. Remember that, even if they don't come here expressly to look for El Draco, they have a perfect excuse in that cromlech. They are evidently going to shoot a film there."

Jerry scratched his head and looked puzzled. "Bust my pony's old harness! but you are a long way ahead of me, pard, but I believe you are right. And, what's more, I think we had better get out. Pronto!"

So we left that dreadful glade a second time, and, packing our few belongings on the long narrow flat-topped cart, we took our leave of Bat's Wood.

The sun was struggling through a bank of sea mist when we stepped out on to the dusty by-road. Jerry turned the horse's head in the direction of the coast,

and together we trudged along, each sunk deep in his own thoughts, as becomes the most accomplished of tramps. With a patch over one eye, my unshaven jowl, dusty boots and weather-worn clothes, I looked the part every whit as well as my companion. A campaigning life had bronzed my skin to the required texture. The only thing that worried me at all was my hair, but as I had not enjoyed a hair-cut for now nearly a fortnight it was beginning to be sufficiently trampish around the collar. By dint of rubbing, dust into it, I had taken out all semblance of dressing and in another day or two I felt it would be in complete accord with the rest of my make-up. My nails I had roughened and broken by rubbing them on the lime-stone in the quarry. I had not overlooked the smallest detail, and felt confident that I could face even Antrobus himself without a tremor. Your Secret Service man has sometimes to work in the underworld, and years of study prepares him to fit himself into any rôle, from an accredited representative to a crossing sweeper. Part of my war work, for instance, had been passed as a filthy Belgian half-wit. Behind the German lines I slept in unspeakably filthy billets, masticated the vilest of food, and when I came into a room I exuded an effluvia strong enough to have turned a skunk. One of the funniest of my recollections of this phase was that of making a German Hoch Staff Officer sick. A beastly life. Hounded from pillar to post, receiving far more kicks than halfpence, everyman's slave and everyman's butt, I crawled up and down the German communications

for the good of the Cause. Bedraggled, wet to the skin, half-starved and racked with a choking cough I had eventually crossed the lines during an attack, only to be locked up by my own men as a German spy, and nearly shot next morning. Ah well! It's all in the game. Terribly rough, terribly dangerous, but terribly fascinating.

I thought of these things as I trudged along beside Jerry Scant that bright July morning, and although there may be some of you who think that my present mode of life was a rough one, I can honestly say that I felt nothing of the sort. Campaigning, hunting, and Secret Service work under all conditions had hardened me to the utmost rigours. I was fit, still on the right side of forty, and had all the zest of a boy for adventure. Of this latter commodity, as you shall hear, I had my fill.

We had covered, I suppose, about seven miles, working around to the north end of Fox Pit House, when I saw coming towards us over the brow of a hill two cars.

Some intuition warned me it was the film compny on its way out to Bat's Wood.

"Keep your eye open, Jerry," said I, "our friends are on the move."

Jerry had already spotted them.

"Right, pard. You drop behind. Walk behind the cart, about ten yards behind, and mutter to yourself like an old 'un. You and me have fallen out, see?"

His looks became positively forbidding, and his

craggy chin, blue as a chisel, stuck out at a truculent angle. Snatching the pony's bridle, he strode on ahead, and I limped along behind, muttering to myself as suggested. As the cars came closer I saw that they were two open tourers, and that each one was driven by one of the actors. Celia, I noticed was in the first car, and by the way she was laughing and talking I judged that she had dismissed the experiences of yesterday from her mind. She, of course, was totally unaware of the tragedy which had followed after. Neither Antrobus nor the nigger was present, which somehow struck me as ominous.

The front car slowed down, Celia talking excitedly to the driver and pulled up at a cross roads. An excited babel filled the air, and I sensed that the others of the company were chaffing Celia for losing her way. There was no sign-post on the cross roads, and no particular features along the road to indicate their whereabouts. Next moment Jerry was abreast of the car and was about to pass when one of the actors hailed him.

"Hi, you fellow! Which is the way to Bat's Wood?"

At the same moment Celia's eye fell upon me, and I saw her change colour. She had recognised me as the tramp in the wood the previous day. But she recovered herself and looked at Jerry. Evidently she had said nothing to the others about her experiences.

Jerry was magnificent in the way in which he drew the company's attention to himself. Bringing his

pony to a standstill, he picked up a box of collar studs from his stock of odds and ends.

"Buy a collar stud, guv'nor, and I'll tell ye the way," he wheedled. "Whoa! Blast your fat sides!" he shouted at his pony.

One of the young actors laughed.

"Go on, Melbury," he said, "buy the lot. We will all have one."

"Yes, go on," chimed in the others, "let's get on."

The car in the rear tooted its horn derisively, and a cheer went up as the actor called Melbury parted with half-a-crown.

Jerry began slowly to extract a stud, to the great annoyance of the buyer. I stood by dejectedly, muttering to myself the while, and casting sullen glances at the cars and their occupants.

"Go on, man! Keep the half-a-crown and the studs, but tell us the way."

Jerry leisurely pocketed the half-a-crown and grinned cheerfully.

"Straight on, guv'nor," he said, "you can't miss it."

A delighted roar went up, and the actor called Melbury coloured up like a girl. He looked daggers at Jerry, but that worthy had already replaced the studs on the cart.

"Come up, Tishy!" he roared. "Gerrup! you lazy lump of a circus donkey."

And so we proceeded, and the cars shot off, to the accompaniment of much laughing and talking. I

wondered if half of them would be laughing if they knew who I was, or if any of them would be laughing in an hour's time.

As soon as they were out of sight I quickened my pace and walked by the side of Jerry Scant.

"Excellent, partner," I remarked. "But we have tougher work in front of us. Now that this crowd is out of the way for a least a couple of hours I vote we explore the grounds of Fox Pit House."

Jerry grunted. "Wouldn't matter a bit if they were all at home. You are as safe as houses, pard. You deceive me on times. Haw! Haw! Haw! you looks a regular old lag. By dam! You would be too, if you had His Majesty's barber to run the clippers over you."

"I'd rather it were longer, Jerry," I laughed, "then I wouldn't mind meeting them all, the old fox included."

"Don't worry about him, pard. I'll give ye a few things to sell and you can walk in unannounced. I tell you what, pard, I've got some rings with paste in 'em that will just about fetch that negro,"

"Good lad," said I, "trot 'em out."

So Jerry fitted me out with a pocket full of odds and ends to sell, thimbles, studs, reels of cotton, bachelor's buttons and trinkets, and, thus armed, I felt the part.

On the way to the gates, Jerry schooled me in the art of selling. He dwelt much on the value of persistence, and, entering with grim reality on the importance of selling the stuff, he warned me that unless

I came back with more money than I started out with I should have no supper.

"I mean it, pard," he said with a great oath. "You've got to be worth your salt. I can't afford to carry passengers."

I thought this was carrying things too far, for I knew that he meant exactly what he said. Jerry Scant never threatened unless he carried out. I rebelled against it, of course, but I was presently to learn that old Jerry Scant was wise with the wisdom of Solomon, and I blessed his forethought.

To gain experience I tried my hand at two farm-houses we passed, with indifferent success. As a final test I tried to sell a home-made besom to an old Welsh housewife. Jerry lay on a bank outside and rocked with silent laughter, whilst I parried refusal after refusal. And when I put my foot in the doorway to prevent a premature ending to the interview I heard an explosion in the lane like blasting operations at a quarry, and retired, to find Jerry absolutely helpless with mirth.

"Oh! By dam! Pard. You'll be the death of me one of these days. 'Buy a nice besom now. So fine as a shaving brush. Light as a peacock's feather and as strong as a comb.' Haw! Haw! Haw! By dam! You can beat me at me own game. But a little more wheedling, pard. A little more wheedling and you are 'it'."

Soon after we came up to the main drive, but I was in favour of finding a rear entrance if there was

such a thing. So we pushed on down the lane, and presently came to a narrow tree-tunnelled drive which was evidently used by tradesmen. Outside of this Jerry tied up his pony.

"I'm going to have a look around on my own account, pard. I thought of putting up a couple of rabbit wires or so. We can do with 'em. And it will be a good excuse for us if we are nabbed when we prowl around to-night,"

"Be very careful, Jerry," I warned him. "Remember we are up against killers."

"Right, pard. I'll remember," he said. "If you are back first untie the nag and go on down the lane. Call at Black Hob Farm at the bottom. It's about a mile and half along. I'll join you there. S'long."

With that he disappeared noiselessly through a hedge bordering the estate and was gone. I opened the drive gate and passed in. Proceeding slowly along, my head bent on the ground and muttering to myself, I cast furtive looks about me, the picture of a regular down and outer. A carpet of last winter's dead leaves still covered the drive, which was badly kept. The wood on either side showed the same traces of neglect. Seeing that Antrobus and his crowd were merely renting the place, however, they could not be blamed for that. But there was something repellent in the dank air which hung stagnant in the wood. A smell of dead leaves, rotting wood and damp moss permeated the air, so different from the clear, sweet smell of the lanes. A chill struck me,

like the touch of a cold sponge. And when a stick cracked like a pistol shot under my foot I almost jumped. Down and down wound the drive, passing a dismal-looking well, where the water dripped with a dreary sound. A thought flashed through my head that the lair of the fox was well chosen, and that the place was suitably named. Fox Pit House! Could anything have been more appropriate for the person who inhabited it.

Now that I was on his domain I felt none of the assurance I had felt in the lane. It was as though some vital force had been sucked out of me by my sinister surroundings. I heartily wished that Antrobus and the negro were with the two cars which had passed us on the road.

Presently, down through the trees I saw the tops of chimneys and the grey slate roof of Fox Pit House. Somehow or other this repelled me more than the loneliness of the wood. Some houses, however old are friendly and welcoming, but this ungainly and ill-proportioned mass of stone and mortar, sprawling like a giant in the valley, was inexpressibly hostile. It was the sort of house which might have boasted of a murder.

With these cheerless thoughts chasing through my brain, I ambled into a very large stable-yard. A hasty glance around showed me that the coach-houses had been turned into garages. The harness-rooms were used as storerooms. Through one of these windows I caught sight of some tightly-strung packages. With a thrill I noticed one covered with a material

that looked remarkably like oiled silk. I wondered whether I dared try the door. I took a half step towards it, then decided, that it was certain to be locked, and resumed my shuffling gait to the kitchen door. It was lucky for me I did so, for a man-servant came out and deposited some rubbish in an ash pit. Catching sight of me he treated me to a prolonged and, I thought, astonished stare.

"Here, you," he said roughly, "be off. We don't encourage tramps here."

"Buy a pair of laces, guv'nor," I whined, "or a postcard. I've got some good uns here, guv'nor." I tipped him a leering wink.

"I don't want anything. Be off, or I'll set the dog on you."

I had clean forgotten that savage Alsatian. This was a complication.

Just then I heard an unmistakable voice. I was standing at the corner of one of the garages. The people in it could not see me and, as I had not passed the entrance, could have no idea that I was there. Antrobus was speaking, and I just caught the tail end of a sentence. "—to-night at eleven-thirty. Kelly will take it up in the Austin. We are getting overloaded here—dangerous." A door slammed and I heard no more.

Whilst this was going on I was burrowing in my pockets for the postcards, and I did not look up as I heard a warning hiss. A moment later Slinkof came out of the garage alone. Antrobus had gone out through a door at the back, which I afterwards

discovered led directly into the house. The man-servant had warned Slinkof that someone was about, but I pretended not to be aware of it.

"'Ere you are, guv'nor," I said, and stopped in feigned confusion as Slinkof emerged from the garage.

His quick suspicious look swept me from top to toe, but, evidently satisfied with his scrutiny, he passed by me and made off towards the drive, leaving the servant to deal with me.

"'Ere you are, guv'nor," I said, advancing to the attack once more, "they're only tuppence apiece. Real good 'uns, they're——"

"Will you get out?"

The little weed advanced on me menacingly, and I backed in simulated alarm. As a matter of fact there was nothing I wanted to do more than to get out. A sentence was burning itself into my brain. ("To-night at eleven-thirty. To-night at eleven-thirty. To-night at eleven-thirty.") But I forced myself to the business in hand. One of the maxims of the Secret Service is to absolutely live in the part one is playing. Only thus can success come, and I realised now the soundness of Jerry's threat. I had to sell my goods, or I had no supper.

"Only one, guv'nor," I whined. "For Gawd's sake buy one. I've had nary bite nor sup to-day and I ain't took a sou, guv'nor. Buy one, guv'nor. Just one, guv'nor."

The buxom figure of a cook flounced out of the door, creating a diversion in my favour.

"Have you got any scissors, my man?" she asked addressing me.

I ambled forward.

"Yes, lady. That I 'ave, lady. As fine pairs of scissors as you'd buy in Harford. Better, lady, an' cheap."

I brought out a much-soiled box from one of my pockets and, opening it, displayed two or three pairs of scissors, some needles, pins, wool and cotton.

"'Ere y'are, lady. Only two bob. Thank you, lady. Gawd bless you, lady. Any needles, or pins, or some darning wool, lady. Only penny a skein, lady. Cheaper'n what you buy in Harford."

Out of the corner of my eye I saw that Slinkof stood watching me from the bottom of the drive. So I turned back to the man servant and brought out my greasy set of postcards.

"Come on, guv'nor," I wheedled. "Buy just one, guv——"

"Will you hop it when I tell you?"

"Just one guv——"

"Get out!" he shouted.

"Oh, orl right, guv'nor. Needn't get your wool off."

I hobbled away, intending to try my luck on Slinkof, but the damned Alsatian came around the corner, and stood looking from Slinkof to me with a dreadful kind of expectancy. Tail between his legs in true Alsatian style, he came towards me with his stomach low on the ground and hard bright eyes fixed on mine.

I backed in alarm.

"Call 'im off, guv'nor," I gasped hoarsely. "Call 'im off. I'm going now."

Slinkof checked the dog and smiled at me cruelly, baring his gold-stopped teeth.

"Don't come here again," he snarled.

I circled around him fearfully, and hobbled away up the drive as fast as my legs would carry me.

Behind me I heard a callous laugh, and Slinkof's grating voice.

"Skomer puts the wind up them. We don't get many now. I'll bet we don't see that Weary Willy again anyway."

A figure stepped out from behind a bush. It was Jerry. "'E's a flaming liar, pard, ain't he?" he whispered.

"Good God, Jerry!" I ejaculated softly, "you will make me drop down dead one of these days."

"Anything doing, pard?"

I slapped my pocket and grinned.

"Yes. Half a crown."

"Excellent," said Jerry. "You'll have supper. Rabbit, fried in breadcrumbs!"

We were well over half a mile away from the grounds of Fox Pit House before I told Jerry exactly what had transpired. He then related to me his experiences.

"I've been right around the whole estate and through some of it, pard," he said. "It's a tumble-down, ramshackle old show. The house has been empty for years before these film people took it. The

grounds go right down to the sea. There's a pretty little cove at the bottom. Looks as if a small boat could run in, pard. I wanted to explore it, but there was a fellow pretending to be fishing off a ledge of rock at the sea end. I watched him for a while. He didn't see me. If he's a fisherman I'll eat my hat and old Blossom's harness as well. It's a funny thing, pard, but I've never been into that there cove, and I don't remember seeing it before, though it's a part of Deadman's Bay. There's an old disused slate quarry in Deadman's Bay, pard, and its sides are pretty steep. This little cove is cut off, as 'twere, from the rest of the bay by two high spiky ridges. It's a sort of bay within a bay, d'ye get me? I took a good squint around, but didn't have much time, as I wanted to complete the circuit. So I slid down the coombe and shinned up the other side and popped across a couple of fields and got into the wood. I only got in just in time, for as I cocked my leg over a wall another Johnny came into the field from the other end. He carried a big knobby stick and tried to look as if 'e were out for an airing, but 'e weren't no walker, pard. Eat my hat if he was! Eat old Blossom's hay if he was. He were on sentry go, pard. Take it from me he were on sentry go. The bally place is watched like a camp. We'll have a tough job poaching there, pard."

"Great Scott, Jerry, if it's patrolled like that I don't see how we will get in, let alone down to the house."

"Don't you fret yourself, pard. Old Jerry can get in and out of anywhere. Specially in the dark."

I chuckled grimly. "You are optimistic, Jerry. Have you remembered the dog?"

Jerry turned on me and closed one expressive eye.

"Just you leave that to your uncle," he said mysteriously. "I knows a thing or two about dogs."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

Jerry's boisterous laugh smote the air. Lowering his voice, he leaned towards me.

"On that cart, partner, there's a little preparation of my own patent. It's got no name. You just rub it on the skin of your hands and there ain't a dog breathing as would tackle you."

I gazed at him in astonishment.

"Nothing marvellous about it, pard," he continued. "It's all part of my work to be on good terms with dogs. The frog of a horse's hoof is pretty good stuff. They likes that. But my preparation is better, for they just lies quiet as if nothing had happened to disturb 'em. They don't even bark." Once again the eyelid closed and Jerry looked unutterably crafty.

We carried out our routine work all that day just as if nothing had happened, and set up our little tent about a mile away from the grounds of Fox Pit House. Looking at Jerry's face as he cooked our poached rabbit, I could trace no sign of alarm or even excitement. I wondered whether he had realised the deadliness of the risk we purposed to run. I knew only too well that if we aroused the slightest sus-

picion in the minds of Antrobus and his gang our lives would not be worth a minute's purchase. It was, indeed, a toss up as to whether they would shoot on sight, irrespective of person or business. Sooner than allow any of their secrets to be discovered, I guessed they would go to any lengths.

Something was going to be moved that night, however, and I wanted to see what that something was. Neither Jerry nor myself carried any weapons, we preferred to put our sole trust in our obvious characters. Jerry, of course, was perfectly natural, but I had a rôle to play, so that my part was rather more difficult.

But I had no illusions as to the risk we both ran. Neither had Jerry, as his later movements will show.

We sat long over our supper, and afterwards smoked our pipes in silence. I watched the pale moon sail from behind a hill, and the big white star come up in the West. From afar off came the roll and crash of breakers, the great green Atlantic rollers, that came surging perpetually past this bleak headland. Somewhere along that stretch of coast on just such nights as this illicit cargoes had been run in with stealthy haste. Lights had flickered and winked, dark, sinister craft had made hurried dashes into hidden creeks. Crouching, low-voiced men had slunk into the shadows, and all whilst the countryside lay wrapped in slumber.

Following up a line of thought, I made guesses as to where the smugglers kept their craft. It was undoubtedly run in with a yacht, or a motor boat,

but, if so, then there would be the difficulty of concealing the craft when not in use. Foreign vessels would be met in the open sea and the cargo transferred. The vessel could go into any port with a clean bill of health, and the matter devolved on the smaller craft. I felt pretty convinced that this was the method adopted, though they probably had more than one. Before definitely taking up the case I had rooted out all manner of books about the old time smugglers, and made myself acquainted with their favourite ruses. Some of them were perfectly astounding.

The old Sussex smugglers had fishing boats with hollow masts, and, anchoring over a submarine storage, discharged their five or six gallons of brandy whilst ostensibly unloading fish. Casks were coated with chalk and left on the beach camouflaged as boulders. Whole hogsheads of spirit were hauled up the cliffs at Beachy Head and Birling Gap with tackle. Churches were used as storerooms. Pevensey and Rye were regular smugglers' headquarters. Although we live in a modern world, the basic principles of war and smuggling remain the same. Antrobus and his gang had to consider exactly the same problems as the old time Sussex smuggler. First, a profitable line, secondly a means of running it in unseen, thirdly storage, and lastly distribution.

To-night I hoped to find out something about the storage. I was pretty certain, from the shred of conversation I had overheard, that some of the stuff was being moved to-night. If those yellow packages

in the harness room were the future cargo then I had solved one of the problems. But on reflection I could scarcely credit that a man of Antrobus's genius would allow such stuff to lie exposed in a harness room. No, there was evidently some secret hiding place somewhere in the grounds of Fox Pit House. The packages in the harness room would probably contain film kit. Anyway, to-night would prove one theory or the other to be wrong.

"Time's up, pard," said Jerry.

A distant church clock was striking ten. We had an hour and a half in which to reach our objective. Personally, I thought it was as forlorn a hope as ever a man embarked upon. It was exactly like sticking "one's head into a hornet's nest."

Jerry rose to his feet and knocked out the dottle of his pipe on the wheel of the cart. His face was impassive, but his eyes were wary and watchful. He threw a handful of dry grass into the air and watched the breeze catch it. A regular old snipe shooter's trick.

"Got your wires, pard?" he asked. I nodded.

"Better put that in your pocket as well." He slung a young snared rabbit across.

"Makes it more realistic, pard," he chuckled. "You are dead certain you've got nothing on you that'll give the game away, I s'pose. No writing or anything like that."

"Absolutely certain, Jerry," I replied.

"Righto, then, pard. Rub some of Scant's patent dog-foozler on your mitts and we're off."

I did as I was told, and pretty pesky stuff it was. It had a strong aroma like rotting seaweed and ensilage mixed.

We could have wished for a darker night, and also more wind. But Jerry seemed not in the least perturbed: as a matter of fact he appeared to regard it as an every night matter.

"Just you wait until you've dodged gamekeepers as many times as I have, pard, and you won't take any notice of the old moon. The thing is to know how to make use of 'im. He casts nice thick black shadows, you see. Watch your uncle now and no noise."

With that he stepped into the dark shadow of a wall, and was one with the darkening night. I had quite as much as I could do to keep him in sight without troubling my head about probable watchers.

It was simply marvellous the way in which he crossed the intervening fields. Taking advantage of every little fold in the ground, every wall, ditch or shadow, he led me over as difficult a piece of ground as one could have picked out for this sort of work. I thought, however, that he had chosen a rather bad line of approach. With my training as a hunter I could have picked out many a better one. In spite of his uncanny gift of keeping out of sight, my faith in him wavered a little.

Presently he dropped behind a thick clump of bramble. We were then about a hundred yards away from the wood, and there did not appear to be a scrap of cover between us and it.

He lay perfectly still for at least two minutes, then he nudged my arm.

"Someone about two hundred yards on our left, pard. He's covering the line of approach through those furze bushes. Keep low, you'll see his head come up on the sky line in a minute."

Sure enough, in another second I saw the dark blob of a man's head silhouetted against the moon.

Jerry was whispering again.

"I've chosen this way, pard, because there ain't much cover. It's so bare of bushes that they most likely won't watch it much."

In a flash I realised what sound generalship lay behind Jerry's line of approach, and I could have kicked myself for a novice. I realised now that he had carefully studied the problem of approach, and that he must have mapped out this course from the commencement. His preliminary reconnoitre of the morning had stood him in good stead, and, like a good scout, he carried a map of the whole position in his mind's eye. Once again, I was forced to respect this wandering mendicant, who was jack-of-all-trades, and never at a loss.

For the space of five minutes the head remained on the sky line, then was withdrawn.

Jerry gave the watcher another minute, then crawled out from behind the bush on all fours. I followed him, and found myself in a shallow depression which ran directly towards the wood. It was high enough to give perfect cover from anyone on our right, whilst the watcher on the left had turned on

his beat. It was clever work, vastly clever work, and I began to feel more hopeful. At last, after what seemed to me an hour, we reached the edge of the wood. At this point it was bounded by a four-foot stone wall. Trees overhung the top, and blackberry bushes grew in clumps along it. On the field side was a deep dry ditch, and into this we dropped with relief. We were not a bit too soon, for scarce had we crawled underneath a thick clump of blackberry bushes when I heard the soft swish of feet through grass. A watcher from the right was coming along the edge of the wood.

"Keep still," whispered Jerry. "It's all right. I heard him before we dropped in here. He was not over the brow then."

So we crouched low, scarce daring to breathe, whilst someone came and stood within a few feet of us. Whoever it was lighted a cigarette, tapping it first on a case, and throwing the match into the very bush where we were hiding. To give you an idea as to how acutely conscious I was of noise, the tapping of the cigarette sounded like a stick striking a rock. I thought we were bound to be discovered by our breathing, but after what seemed an age the man turned back, and with profound relief I heard his footsteps growing fainter.

As quick as thought we were over the wall and into the wood. We were inside safe enough. Goodness only knew when we would get out. Silently we slid through the wood, flitting from tree to tree like shadows. I was no fool at scoutcraft, but I had to

admit that Jerry had me beaten to a frazzle. I merely left matters entirely in his hands, and followed practically in his footsteps. Very soon we were down close to the house. The lights were full on in the front, so we worked our way around to the back. Here all was in darkness, and we were able to work right down to the very edge of the yard where we ensconced ourselves separately in two clumps of pampas grass.

For half an hour or more nothing happened. Then the Alsatian appeared suddenly out of nowhere, trotted towards the bush where Jerry lay hidden, stopped, sniffed, wagged its tail and walked sedately down into the yard. A moment later, some garage doors were rattled and opened from the inside. It seemed as if all the garages could be entered from inside the house. This was unusual in this class of building, and pointed to alterations by the present tenants. A blinding beam of light shot across the yard, followed by a roar as an engine started up. In another minute a large saloon Austin stood in the yard, and the man called Kelly descended agilely from the driving seat. He wore goggles, but I recognised him by his build. A moment later Antrobus and the negro appeared, followed by two of the actors, Slinkof and one other of the producing staff. I noted this with a certain amount of self-satisfaction for I had been suspicious of the producing side all along.

Without any hesitation Antrobus walked over to the harness room, and, unlocking the door, passed

in. I strained every nerve to see and hear what went on. The negro followed him in, but the others remained outside talking in low tones. Slinkof lighted a cigarette, and flicked the match away nervously. He, at any rate, was keyed up to concert pitch. I caught the sound of an inner door being unlocked, and realised that the parcels I had seen through the harness room window were, after all, quite innocent, and that the dangerous ones were kept in some secret hiding-place. This supposition was confirmed a moment later when I heard Antrobus call out for Kelly. His voice sounded curiously muffled and seemed to come from a great way off. In a flash I realised that he was speaking from a cellar, and in my inmost mind I knew I had discovered the storing place. One part of my quest was fulfilled. Would that I had left it at that and retired at our first opportunity. But I had no time for reasoned thought at the moment, for my attention was fully occupied with what was going on. Slinkof and the remainder left outside formed themselves into a chain, and parcel after parcel was handed out through the harness room door. Each parcel was about eighteen inches long, a foot wide and nine inches deep. All seemed of uniform shape and all were covered with a wrapping which looked like oiled silk. These were handled with the celerity of the Dutch cheese porters at the Alkmaar cheese market. In less than five minutes I should say that a score of parcels were packed securely and neatly into the body of the car. A couple of rugs were thrown

over the top and the door closed. Antrobus and the negro reappeared and the harness room door locked.

"How many film rolls did you take?" asked Antrobus.

"Three," Slinkof replied. "Quite enough. Personally I think it is waste of room."

Antrobus peered at him short-sightedly, his lean face gleaming, his lithe fingers writhing.

"Personally you need think of nothing, Slinkof," he purred.

Slinkof shrank back as from a blow, the remainder of the group eyeing him like a pack of hungry dogs eyeing a wounded one. It was an ugly scene, and never up till then did I realise what power Antrobus had over these lawless men. It was easy to see that, under the suavity and urbane manner, he ruled with an iron hand.

He crossed over to Kelly and gave him some instructions. I could not catch a word, unfortunately, but I kept my eyes well open, noting every movement. Slinkof stood behind like a whipped cur, all the swagger gone out of him.

The door of the car was opened again, and Antrobus peered in underneath the rugs. Satisfied that all was well, he withdrew his head and closed the door. He turned his head, slowly surveying his confederates.

"Come into the house," he said, "there is something I want to show you all."

The gang looked at one another uneasily, and Antrobus laughed harshly.

"Just a little warning," he added. "I believe that prevention is better than cure, you know."

Without deigning to see how his words were received, he turned about and walked into the kitchen, the remainder following like sheep. As the last man disappeared I made up my mind. "Nothing venture nothing have," and I badly wanted to see inside one of those parcels. Cautiously I backed out of the pampas, and, after a final look to see if the coast was clear, I darted into the yard. Keeping out of the beams from the headlights I reached the car. Leaping at the door I tugged at the handle, but it was one of those confounded double locking things, and a loud click was the only result. Frantically I pulled again, but the thing wouldn't budge. Then, coolly, I pushed it to again and, turning the handle hard over, I pulled and it swung open. Lifting the rug, I seized one of the parcels and turned to make off. But I heard a coughing grunt and a rush of swift feet, and next instant the negro was on me. Flight was hopeless, so dashing the parcel down I tackled him low around the knees. His huge form swung right over me and I heard his head crash sickeningly against the body of the car. But next instant I was overwhelmed with a medley of trampling feet. The parcel was ripped open by a wildly stamping heel and a white powder poured out like castor sugar. Cocaine undoubtedly!

I was hauled ignominiously to my feet, and stood blinking uncertainly, with my one eye into the beam

of an electric torch. Above the din came Antrobus's cool, authoritative voice.

"Somebody clear up that sugar. Kelly, you get off. At once, do you hear? I'll deal with this—this thieving rat."

Kelly jumped into the car, let in the clutch and literally shot out of the yard.

The light from the torch dazzled me and I could see little of what was going on. But dimly I saw the Nubian stagger to his feet, and saw him rock on his feet as he lifted his huge paws to his head. His skull must have been like iron.

"Bring him into the house," Antrobus ordered. So I was half dragged, half pushed along, protesting and whining all the while.

"Let me go, guv'nor! I didn't mean to steal, guv'nors, s'welp me Gawd, I didn't. Ole Nobby Clark didn't mean to steal. Let me go this time, guv'nors. For Gawd's sake let me go."

I was pushed thus protestingly along a passage, until I found myself in a room which, in a better ordered house, would have been the silver room. A huge, double-doored cupboard completely covered one side, a small sink occupied a corner, and a baize-topped shelf ran along under the window. An extra lamp was brought in and stood on the shelf, there being no electric light.

Antrobus stood with his back to the light, peering at me short-sightedly, his face literally twisted with suspicion. Taking a revolver out of his pocket he laid it on the shelf behind him.

"Leave him with me," he snarled. "Get out and close the door."

Next instant I was alone with him, my knees feeling dreadfully weak, but my head becoming clearer with each succeeding second. I should need all my wit and all my nerve to pull out of this fix with a whole skin. What a fool I was to have attempted to get away with a sample of their goods right under their very eyes. I ought to have known better. But some madness had prompted me and I simply had to try it.

For the space of half a minute Antrobus was silent, his tinted glasses turning to every part of my person. I stood first on one foot then on the other, twisting my cap in my hands.

"Give me that cap!"

His voice cut the air like a whip lash, and I started to mumble as I shambled forward and handed it to him.

He peered into it and flung it down with an attitude of disgust.

"Faugh!"

"I didn't steal it, guv'nor," I whined. "S'welp me Gawd, I didn't steal it. Ole Nobby——"

"Stop whining and answer my questions."

His long fingers were writhing like the snakes out of Medusa's head, his breath came short, and behind his tinted glasses his eyes narrowed to pin points. I felt a chill creep over me. I stood face to face with the fiend incarnate.

"What is your name and where do you live?"

The questions seemed to leap out of his mouth, impelled by some subterranean force. I was literally staggered by the force of them.

"Nobby Clark, guv'nor, that's what they calls me, guv'nor." I smiled vacuously. "I lives on the road, guv'nor."

His brows came together dark as thunderclouds.

"Ever been here before?"

I had made up my mind to play the rôle of a half-wit, my old Belgian peasant rôle which had deceived the German Staff for eighteen months. My smile became more senile and a thin trickle of saliva came from the corner of my mouth.

"Come, you idiot," he shouted, "answer me, or I'll soon find a way to silence you for good." His hand closed on the butt of the revolver, and his head came forward aggressively.

"Now then," he asked, "have you been here before?"

"Yes, guv'nor," I answered.

For a moment this seemed to nonplus him and he expelled his breath in a hissing sigh.

"Ahh! And when, may I ask, did you call?"

My mouth grew more flaccid than ever, and my smile more naïve.

"This afternoon, guv'nor," I replied. "Here 'safternoon, guv'nor. Sold lady some scissors."

"Lady?" he queried. "What lady?"

"Come into the yard she did and asked for 'em. A stout lady, guv'nor. I don't know who she was. Let me off this time, guv'nor. I swear I won't steal again, guv'nor. I——"

"Pah! Hold your tongue, imbecile."

He had laid the revolver back on the shelf, and with a quick movement he pulled one of the lamps nearer. Leaning back against the shelf he stared hard into my face.

"Now I warn you," he said, "be very careful how you answer me. What did you think was in the parcel you stole?"

"I don't know, guv'nor."

"Did you hear what I said outside."

"No, guv'nor."

"Did you hear me tell them to sweep up the sugar?"

"Yes, guv'nor."

"Then you know it was sugar."

"No, guv'nor."

He raised his long arms above his head in a frenzy, and ground his teeth in his rage.

"Name of a pipe! Why do such things live?"

"Dunno, guv'nor," I said.

For a moment I thought he was going to dash his fist into my face, and I changed my vacuous smile into a look of alarm.

"Please let me go this time, guv'nor," I whined. "I didn't mean to steal any sugar. Old Nobby didn't mean to steal any sugar."

A look of amusement swept over his face, and I permitted my ingratiating smile to come back. But at the back of my mind there was fear, sheer, stark fear. Antrobus had thought out some devilish scheme.

"What were you doing in the grounds to-night?"

"Nothing, guv'nor."

"Ah! Nothing." His face came closer to mine, and with a swift notion he brought the lamp around within a foot of my face.

"Take off that eye-shade."

I felt as if the whole world were sinking into a bottomless pit. Fumblingly I put up my hand. It was, I felt, now or never. I blessed the forethought which had made me rub salt into my eye until it was red and inflamed. It was, as a matter of fact, so painful now that I had to use a shade of necessity.

I lifted the shade gingerly, but let it down again.

"Why, guv'nor?" I whined. "It's painful, guv'nor. What's the idea, guv'nor?"

"Take it off," he snarled.

Fumblingly I obeyed, but shrank back as the rays of the lamp smote harshly into my groggy eye.

"Keep still, damn you," he hissed.

My eyes streamed water, and as through a mist I was conscious of huge, tinted glasses coming closer and closer to my face until they loomed like gigantic spectrums floating in mid-ar.

"Can't stick it, guv'nor," I whined.

Antrobus gave a grunt, and, replacing the lamp on the shelf, walked across to the door. Opening it, he shouted for the nigger.

Returning to the shelf, he lolled again it indolently. The Nubian came in, with black head swathed in bandages. In spite of my predicament I felt a tiny

thrill of satisfaction. But I had to guard my looks, as Antrobus was watching me like a cat watches a mouse.

"Search him!"

The negro advanced towards me, then recoiled a step, but out of the corner of my eye I saw black suspicion sweep over Antrobus's face.

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, baas. Him poacher."

"Ah!"

The negro advanced again, a cruel smile twisting his thick lips.

"I search you, eh? Blasted poacher, eh!"

Next moment his huge paws had fastened on my shoulders, and he squeezed until my bones cracked.

The agony was exquisite, and I shouted with pain.

I had a rôle to play, bear in mind, and under these circumstances it was doubly difficult.

I struggled feebly, crying and whimpering like a whipped cur. The negro's strength was prodigious. It was just as though my shoulders were being crushed in a vice.

At last he released me, and I staggered about holding first one shoulder then the other. I changed my tune. From whining and cringing I became threatening.

"I'll have the law on yer for this, guv'nor. S'welp me Gawd I will. You've gone too far with old Nobby this time."

Antrobus gazed into my white and angry face, and turned on the negro fiercely.

"I said search him, not crush him. Get to it."

Once again the huge negro came forward, but I cowered away. Reaching out a huge hand he dragged me forward. I felt his other hand groping in my pockets, and struggled feebly as he brought out first a dead rabbit, then some wires, a pocket-knife, some plug tobacco and some string.

"Poacher, baas. Him blasted poacher. I catch him once in Bat's Wood."

Watching Antrobus out of half-idiot sort of eyes, I saw a guarded look come over his face. It was just as if someone had lowered a blind over a shop window.

"That will do. Go! Send the Lady Celia Ferlie to me."

I had much ado to keep up my stare of idiocy, but as I was prepared for anything in this house of lawlessness, I succeeded pretty well. Antrobus, I felt, had his tinted glasses turned on me.

"Let me go now, guv'nor," I whined. "Old Nobby ain't deserved all this, guv'nor."

But I might as well have addressed my remarks to the Sphinx. Antrobus leaned against the shelf and looking over my shoulder gazed at the door. I realised that Celia Ferlie would be the next subject for his devilish inspection. He would watch the emotions flitting across her face, as he had tried to see mine. No detail escaped him, however small, and his patience was inexhaustible. It was quite evident that he knew the full story of what had happened to Celia Ferlie in Bat's Wood,

and was now going to verify things in his own way.

The door opened and Celia Ferlie stood there.

She brought into this room of terror an air of freshness and innocence that was incongruous. Anyone more out of place in this den of thieves could not be imagined. Her voice was as clear as a bell.

"You sent for me?"

Antrobus inclined his head in assent. Languidly he waved a hand towards me.

"Do you know this—object?"

Celia's glance rested on me and I saw her wince.

"I don't know who this is, of course, Mr. Antrobus, but I have seen him before. He was the tramp who——" she hesitated, "who came on the scene in Bat's Wood."

"You are certain you do not know him," Antrobus asked, and his voice had a curiously compelling ring.

Watching Celia as closely as I dared, I was pleased to see an angry flush mount to her brow.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Antrobus, explain yourself."

Antrobus laughed nervously.

"I wanted to make certain that he was the man you saw in Bat's Wood, my dear," he explained. "You see, we have caught him stealing."

Celia's eyes regarded me once more, and I saw a look of pity enter them as she took in my helpless appearance.

"That's bad," she commented, "but the poor devil looks as though he's starving."

Antrobus merely grunted like an animal. I felt I could have jumped for his throat and squeezed his foul life out. But I kept up my inane smile, half-fearful, half-detached, and wholly cringing.

"Very good, Celia," he said, "Send Slinkof to me. I wish to make arrangements as to where I shall keep him until the police arrive."

At this I broke out afresh.

"For pity's sake, lady, don't let him hand me over to the police. I won't steal again, lady, straight I won't."

Celia paused, thoughtfully.

"Of course, you know best, Mr. Antrobus, but don't be too hard on the poor wretch. What's he been stealing by the way?"

"Oh, never mind, never mind," replied Antrobus testily. "Send Slinkof in. I'll consider the case, believe me."

He arose and opened the door for her, and Celia left. I felt as if an ally had left me.

Never had I felt so much alone. But I knew it was a lone game when I started out, so I had no one to blame but myself.

Antrobus came back to the centre of the room. He pointed to a chair in the corner.

"Sit over there," he growled.

I obeyed, placing my feet carefully before me in the way of my present fraternity.

Slinkof entered. Like Celia, he started on seeing me, and he commenced to say he had seen me before, but Antrobus cut him short.

"Keep an eye on him," he snarled. "I'll be back in a moment or two.

He was away, I suppose, for about ten minutes, during which time I begged and prayed Slinkof to prevent my being handed over to the police. All I got from him, however, was a snarl from his wolfish jaws.

Antrobus returned bearing a tray on which were set tea things. Setting them on the shelf, he turned to me genially.

"You must be thankful, my man," he said, "that the lady wishes us to treat you with kindness." He paused, and I thought of the cat before its final pounce.

"A little cup of tea now. You must be fatigued after all this questioning."

I blinked up at him foolishly, my smile growing wider and more idiotic. But my brain was groping, groping blindly and fearfully in the dark. I thought of the look of amusement I had seen on his face earlier in the interview, and felt alarmed. What devilry was he up to now.

"Yes, a little cup of tea, my friend," he continued, "a little cup of tea with two spoonfuls of the sugar in it which you tried to steal. He! He! He!"

A wave of horror swept over me, but I fought hard to make my idiotic smile even more vacuous. Never had I such need for acting a part as now. Summoning up every ounce of will power I kept my voice steady.

"Thank you, guv'nor," I whined, "the good Gawd will reward you."

He poured out the tea himself, keeping his sinister glasses fixed on my face. I knew he was watching my every expression.

"This sugar, my man," he said, "see how fine it is. We will help you liberally. Three spoonfuls Hey! And a fourth for luck, 'tis a big cup."

I felt as if I must faint for the sheer horror of it. The fiend was mixing me a draught of death right under my eyes.

The ingenuity of it was Machiavellian. If I knew that the parcel which I had stolen contained cocaine, then I knew that my cup of tea contained four spoonfuls of it.

Antrobus stirred it around gleefully.

"There," he said, "a cup of tea to die for."

The devil was turning the barb. He could be scarcely human.

He lifted the cup and set it into my outstretched hand. At the same time he reached out for his revolver.

"We can dispense with this now, I think."

Slinkof began to mutter, his eyes turning fearfully from me to his chief.

"No! No!" he whispered, "it's too risky, Antrobus. For God's sake don't do it. It's too risky!"

Mildly surprised, I looked at him, raising the cup above my lips. I had thought it out. I would play for time right up to the last moment, and then spring for Antrobus's feet. A hundred to one chance.

Nay. A thousand to one chance. But the only one.

I leered at Slinkof.

"Good health, guv'nor," I said.

At that very instant came a trampling of feet in the passage. A trampling of feet and the roaring voice of one, Jerry Scant.

As quick as a panther Antrobus struck the cup out of my hand, and I all but fainted with sheer relief.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DRUIDS' CAVES

NEXT moment the door burst open, and Jerry was frog-marched into the room between a couple of toughs.

"Another of 'em, sir," they panted; "looks like his mate. Blasted poachers! That's what they are!"

Jerry was covered with sweat and blood. It was evident that he had been running hard, and also that he had been fighting. His clothes gave him the appearance of having been dragged several times through a quickset hedge. His captors also bore the marks of the chase. A more dilapidated and crestfallen crew I had never seen.

Somehow or other they did not look as though they were sure of their prize. They gave me the impression of having caught a Tartar.

On the other hand, I could see that Jerry was not caring two straws about the whole proceedings. There was on his face a look of hardened waywardness, a devil-may-care sort of look, before which even Antrobus gasped like a fish out of water.

Before he could ask any questions a red-faced, angry stranger thrust his way into the room.

"Where is the damned rogue?" he shouted, "I'll break every bone in his body! The infernal scoundrel!"

Antrobus was almost beside himself with rage. He stepped forward.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked icily. "And who the devil are you?"

The farmer, for such he was, drew himself up with a jerk.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said. "I'm Brinley Davies, of Black Hob Farm." His voice trembled with rage as his temper once again got the better of him. He swung around on Jerry. "By damn, my man, I had a good mind to give you the soundest thrashing you ever had in your life. But I'll see that you get your deserts in prison."

I gave a surreptitious glance at Slinkof's face. It was ashen. Another second and this red-faced, blustering, angry farmer would have burst in and found a dead man.

But, thanks to Jerry Scant, tragedy had been transformed into farce. Somehow or other I knew that he had saved the situation.

Antrobus was rapidly recovering himself. His tinted glasses rested first on me, then on Jerry Scant, and finally on the blustering farmer.

"What's happened, farmer? What's your trouble?"

"Trouble," that worthy exploded. "Why that damned thieving vagabond had the confounded impudence to try robbing my hen-roosts." He waved

his stick aloft to the imminent danger of Antrobus's tinted glasses. "I don't mind the poaching so much," he continued, "I suppose we must put up with that, but when it comes to robbing hen-roosts, why, by damn, I could cheerfully throttle him."

Antrobus had now recovered his composure. Waving a hand casually towards me, he looked down at the farmer.

"We have had our share of trouble, too, you see."

The farmer appeared to see me for the first time, and gave an exclamation.

"Why," he spluttered, "that's the rogue's partner. He was around my place this afternoon selling buttons or some such trash. My wife took pity on him because he seemed half-witted. But it only proves what I've always said, that sort get fat on misguided charity. They're 'work-shys,' that's what they are!"

A cloud seemed to lift from Antrobus's face.

"Oh! So he was around your place, eh?"

The farmer choked. "Yes. But I'll take damn good care they don't get there again in a hurry. I'll have the law on both of them. I know 'em both, this 'ere big bloke is a noted character, I s'pose the half-wit is his tool. But this will get 'em two months' hard if you backs me up, sir." He swung around on me.

"How d'ye like two months in Carmarthen clink, you lousy thief?"

Antrobus appeared to consider.

"Two months, Mr. Davies? Are you sure they would get two months?"

I noticed an exchange of glances between him and Slinkof.

"Oh yes! I'll get 'em two months all right if you leaves it to me, sir."

Slinkof nodded his head and an evil smile crossed his face.

"Good enough," he said, and I read into this a double meaning. Put into plain English it meant that two months would see the activities of the gang on this coast at an end. A throb of despair went through me. If I was lodged in jail the gang could work safely without fear of interruption from a nondescript tramp who had blundered unwittingly on one of their secrets. Putting myself in Antrobus's shoes, I could see that he could only regard me as a half-witted beggar. Every test he had made to discover whether I knew anything about him had failed. This, conjoined with the indisputable evidence of a local farmer, must have convinced him that both Jerry and I were no more than what we appeared.

But there was now another danger for me to consider. We had fallen foul of the law ourselves. The penalty for our offences would have to be paid. And I knew that that sturdy old farmer was about right. It would mean two months' hard without the option. My vacuous smile re-appeared and I began to whine and cringe. Jerry remained contemptuously aloof.

Fresh voices were heard in the passage, and one of the gang appeared.

"Policeman here, sir," he announced.

"Policeman?" Antrobus frowned.

The farmer danced with glee.

"Good old Jack! Now we have got the swines all hot. My son telephoned for the constable when I set out after his nibs here," he explained. "Here, Jack," he shouted. "Handcuff these two beauties!"

Jerry struggled half-heartedly, but I intercepted a swift glance which warned me to submit.

In less time than it takes to tell we were handcuffed together, and, after being duly warned, were marched out into the night. It was all done so swiftly that we were proceeding up the drive with a heavy-footed policeman, and the quick-tempered farmer behind us, before we realised what had happened.

Our plight was parlous enough, but every time I thought of the discomfited Antrobus I chuckled aloud. I would have wagered every penny I had that he was a sorely puzzled man.

Behind us there went on a curious conversation, and I realised that the farmer was a nasty, vindictive old man.

"I'm glad you bundled 'em off quick, Jack," he said. "I believe that tall bloke with the coloured specs wanted to keep 'em both down at the house."

The policeman laughed. The flattery was pleasing. "Nothing like getting them under my own roof. I'll telephone through for a van. They'll be in Harford jail before morning."

The farmer slapped his thigh with satisfaction.

"That's the spirit, my boy. Nothing like being keen on your duty. Ye see, I didn't altogether like

the looks of that long 'un down yonder. Our birds might have flown by morning. He looked like one of those scholar fellows with more brains than common sense. Like as not he'd have lost his nerve, and these beauties would have given 'im the slip."

"They'll have to be smart to give me the slip," chimed in the constable.

"I'm certain of that, Jack," replied the farmer. "But that long 'un down below. Huh! He was talking to the half wit as I blew in. Talking to him and handing him a cup of tea. Tea for a damned burglar, mind you! He dropped it when I busted in behind this 'ere big 'un. Dropped it and looked as scared as a rabbit. No, I didn't mean to leave 'em down there. I've been done out of two good fowls, but I'll see they don't have the liberty winging them."

"You are a thoroughly nasty and bad-tempered old man," thought I, "but you've done us a good turn if only you knew it."

And so, to the accompaniment of this running talk, we trudged our way up the long drive and out on to the road. Turning left we proceeded down the hill towards Black Hob Farm. The policeman's house evidently lay beyond it.

And all this time there was no word from Jerry. No word and no sign. His face was wooden, and his eyes stared straight before him unseeingly. It was as though he was resigned to his fate.

The low walls on each side of the road flowed past us like undulating ribbons, the moon lighting up the grey stones with ghost-like glimmer. Stunted trees loomed up in the distance, were passed and dropped away behind. Presently, as we neared the bottom, the wall gave place to high, thick hedges, covered with sweet-scented honeysuckle. Rustling sycamores cast thick black shadows athwart the road, and in this darkness the fluttering bats darted up and down long tree-sheltered tunnels.

Rounding the last bend I saw before me the white-washed banks of stones which marked the entrance to Black Hob Farm. As we came abreast of this the farmer slackened pace.

"Look here, Jack," he said, "you had better come in and have a noggin before going on. My missus will be anxious to see us back again. It will relieve her mind to know that we have got these rogues safely handcuffed. We can lock 'em up in one of my stables. They'll be as safe as houses. How about it?"

The policeman hesitated. "No, Mr. Davies, I think I'll get on."

"Tut, tut, man," the farmer objected. "Don't be so damn silly! You could lock 'em in my stable and telephone Harford from here for that matter. 'Twill save time!"

"Very well. If you have a safe place," the constable conceded.

"Safe. By damn! They'll not get out of the end stable, I reckon. I believe in making

things safe before the horse can go, you know. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

I could have kicked the hard-headed old gentleman. He was so utterly practical. But I became conscious of a subtle pressure on my wrist. Jerry had glimpsed an avenue of escape!

Warily I stepped alongside of him, trying to visualise what he had in mind. Opening the gate, the farmer led the way across the yard. Passing under a 'haggard,'* he paused opposite a line of low outbuildings. I heard him groping over the lintel for a key, and a moment later heard it rattle stiffly in a lock. A heavy door swung back, disclosing a yawning black interior.

"There you are, Jack," he said, "just push 'em in there. It's built to stand, like the rock of Gibraltar."

So the policeman hustled us in. But that is where he made the mistake of his young life, for Jerry, bumping against him, bundled him in with us. The farmer, standing well back, saw three of us go in with a rush and shouted in alarm. Next second the door was slammed in his face, and I heard Jerry's voice low and tense:

"Back against the door, pard. Keep it shut. Keep it shut whatever happens."

I was struck heavily in the face and again in the ribs. Next I was half smothered by the heavy body of the policeman. Dimly I grasped Jerry's plan of campaign. We had now got the policeman between us, and with this free hand Jerry was searching for

* Haggard. Local term. A shelter where hay is kept.

the key of the handcuffs. The door shook under the terrific efforts of the farmer outside, and he was shouting loud enough to wake the dead. Another minute and our efforts would be in vain.

I heard a click, and my hands were free.

Reaching swiftly up I seized the policeman by the lobes of both ears and pulled. A painful but necessary trick. He bellowed with pain, and loosing one hand I gave him a smart tap right under the chin. He crumpled up, and slid down my chest, falling in a heap at my feet.

"Now," shouted Jerry, and he pulled open the door just as farmer Brinley Davies gave one of his violent shoves. The result was really most amusing. The farmer came staggering in like a wounded bull, only to meet a terrific right from Jerry which struck him between the eyes. He went down as if poleaxed and Jerry laughed.

"Bet his eyes are black as crows to-morrow, pard!"

Next instant we were fleeing for dear life across the yard.

Vaulting the gate, we gained the road just as the policeman came to and blew his whistle.

"Fat lot of good that'll do," chuckled Jerry. "Far better put some butter on the farmer's eyes. Flask of rum to a pair of darbies they're black before morning. Ten flasks of rum to the darbies they're black before morning. I'll bet a thousand——"

"Never mind about his eyes, Jerry," I gasped, "step it out. I'll follow." Jerry was running easily, like a trained athlete. He did not appear in the

least ruffled. Above the regular padding of our feet I heard his voice, low and unhurried:

"Got a long way to go, pard. Take it easy. We are off up to the hills to-night. Lay a false trail. Know a little place about ten miles away. Safe as a bank. Gwaun Valley. Caves."

Behind us arose a medley of sounds, people shouting, dogs barking, doors slamming. About twenty yards up the hill a narrow lane gave off to the right. Into this Jerry plunged and I followed.

"Right up the valley," Jerry said. "Can't be headed off. They've got to follow or lose us."

Never shall I forget that run under the smiling moon. Under deep bush-lined banks, through water-splashes, up long slopes, down steep declivities, and up, ever up, until I smelt the unmistakable smell of high places. The smell of mountain herb, and the tang of heath. The character of the country had changed. Gone were the little sycamore-clad valleys, with the nestling farmsteads, and in their place long, sloping, hogs'-back ridges, black, sinister sky lines, craggy-topped and menacing. All around us the curlews whistled like lost souls in the night. Frogs croaked in unison in the high bogs and a cooler, harsher air fanned our sweating brows. I was now just about all in. I felt I could not go another step. Yet in front of me loped the seemingly tireless Scant. Walking and running, I swear we had covered twelve miles of ground. Away in the East a faint reddish glow proclaimed the nearby dawn. Against this I saw the conical top of Cwm Kerwyn

outlined darkly. We seemed to be moving across the roof of the country.

Long ago we had shaken off pursuit. As a matter of fact, I believe they had given up in the first four hundred yards. Yet Jerry had kept on as if they were at his heels. I could not understand this at first, and later was too whacked to think much about it. But the imminent dawn recalled me to our position, and I realised he wanted to go to ground before daybreak. Go to ground, that was the phrase. From now on every man's hand would be against us. We were regular outcasts from society. The lairs of the fox must be our habitation, and the paths of the badger our familiar place.

Rounding the shoulder of a mountain (Jerry never crossed a skyline), I literally gasped with astonishment. Behind me lay desolate mountain side and moorland, devoid of tree or boundary. Below me, almost at my feet, waved the tops of a wood of tall trees. The white rays of a newly-risen sun struck on oak and beech and elm and dark fir tree. Jerry looked back over his shoulder, and I saw that his face was white and strained.

"At last, pard," he murmured. "Sanctuary!"

As we plunged down into the cool depths, the light of the sun was blotted out, and it was once again night. White owls glided noiselessly through the trees, and silence reigned like a pall. For a quarter of a mile or so we went diagonally down through the trees. Thick brambles tore at my clothes, and crawling roots tripped my feet. The trunks of the

trees arose smoothly around us like the pillars of a temple. High overhead hung the thick arch of green leaves, so closely massed together as to be almost impervious to light. The sun was now risen but only occasionally a beam of his light shot athwart our path as through a window. Presently, the undergrowth grew denser, and Jerry had literally to force a path through it. The trunks of the trees grew more massive, and I was suddenly assailed with a sense of awe. I discovered later that we were in the old Druidical groves, but I did not know this at the time. Even the case-hardened Jerry seemed affected, for his progress became slower, and once or twice he stopped as though hesitating. But, pushing on, we presently broke through a veritable wall of undergrowth, and found ourselves in a clearing under a hundred-foot wall of fern-covered rock. The dark mouth of a cave gaped before us, and into this Jerry plunged unhesitatingly. His voice came to me as in a lofty cathedral, and I felt a shiver go down my spine.

"Stand absolutely still, pard, until I get a light."

"Righto, Jerry," I answered, but the reaction setting in, after our tremendous exertions, made this an infernally difficult thing to do. I had reached that stage where action seemed preferable to rest.

I heard the splutter of a match, and a moment later a hurricane lamp shed a feeble light around.

"Been here before," grunted Jerry. "Tell you presently. Follow me, and be careful where you

tread. Nasty cracks here and there. Dropped a stone down one but didn't hear it strike bottom."

"Cheerful, partner. I'm having *such* an enjoyable night."

Jerry laughed, and his laughter went on echoing around, above and below, until I felt the perspiration break out cold on my brow.

We seemed to be in some vast cavern, whose sides and roof I could not see. But in a few moments Jerry found his way to a small tunnel which led on to a compact little cave which bore signs of human habitation. Shelves ran along its walls, a cupboard stood in one corner and a trestle bed in another.

"Here we are, pard," said Jerry. "I don't mind now if the whole country turns out to find us. We are in one of the bolt holes of the ancient Druids, and, let me tell you, it don't do to go messing around here without someone who knows his way in."

I sat down on a ledge and surveyed my strange partner wonderingly.

"You know, Jerry," said I, "you are the most amazing chap I've ever met, and I'm enjoying myself immensely."

Jerry grinned. "That's the spirit, sir. I reckon old Jerry has tried you hard to-night, but you stuck it like a good 'un. I expected you'd crack on the sides of old Carn Ingli. You remember, that craggy-topped old varmint with the broken flanks?"

I nodded. I remembered it only too well. It was the hardest bit of the whole run. I thought my lungs would have burst.

"Just a little rest now, pard. Then I'll get ye some breakfast."

"Breakfast?" I echoed.

Jerry grinned expansively. "Yes, pard. Some good thick rashers of Welsh ham, and some damned good strong tea. You'll be ready to run back then, I'll venture."

So saying, Jerry crossed to the cupboard, opened it, and displayed with pride a flitch of bacon, a canister of tea, sugar, stale bread, some plates, knives, forks and a bundle of short firewood.

"All to hand," remarked Jerry. "Ye see, pard," he continued, "this ain't the first time I've had to bolt for it. I keeps this little store well laid."

"It seems to me as though you have a regular chain of these—er—bolt holes," I observed dryly.

Not a whit abashed, Jerry told me that he had in all no fewer than five bolt holes, including this one and the "office" as he termed it, in the lime-kiln.

"We shall be using the one on the seashore later, pard. That's the best of the lot. There's a getaway by land or water there. Here, although there's several ways out, we've got land only."

During the day which followed we lay low. As a matter of fact both of us were sadly in need of sleep. Speaking for myself, events had moved with such astonishing rapidity during the past week that I had to think hard before I could place the date.

Casting my mind back over the sequence of events, I was astonished to find so little time had elapsed since commencing the job. I had achieved much

already, and yet, compared with what I wanted to do, so little.

At first I had thought it a great stroke of luck when I had fallen upon Antrobus and his crowd through a chance meeting with Celia. But I knew now that I had been deliberately lured there, with the express purpose of my removal. This was one of the factors of the case which disturbed me not a little. For it seemed to point to Celia's being implicated in the plot. At first I could find no other solution. But gradually, as my mind revolved around Antrobus and his Machiavellian schemes, I realised that Celia had merely been used as an unwitting tool, and that I had been under observation from the moment I arrived at Denby. I recollected the garrulous Welsh fisherman I had fallen in with as I set out on my pilgrimage to St. David's. Great Jupiter! What a greenhorn I had been! I had tried pumping him as one pumps a yokel, and all the while he had been gently sizing me up. He had actually advised me to linger awhile on Oldgale Sands, and I, like a fool, had done just what he suggested. He had probably got off the bus at Braich-y-Cwm and had telephoned to Fox Pit House. Then Celia was sent on some errand or other to Harford with instructions to give the dog a run on Oldgale Sands. This, I afterwards found, to be the case.

Step by step I retraced the ground, recollecting first one incident, then another, until I realised that Antrobus had surrounded himself with a network of spies. I brought to mind an affable old gentleman

with white whiskers at Denby who had seemed constantly at my side whichever way I went. And the obliging commercial traveller at Harford who had advised me to book in advance at St. David's.

But of one thing I was certain: and that was that I had thrown Antrobus right off my scent up to the moment. It had been a near thing when he had requested me to remove my eye shade. I thought he would be bound to recognise me then. But my disguise had held, and besides, he could not have been looking to see Colonel Warren in the half-witted tramp, seeing that he had dropped Colonel Warren into Bull Hole some three nights previously. But all the same, it was a precious near thing, and as for his devilish scheme of giving me cocaine instead of sugar in my tea, well—that would have been infallible had not Jerry Scant arrived at the critical moment.

Jerry Scant undoubtedly saved my life that night by his quickness of wit and his courage. He told me that as soon as I had been dragged into the house he slid out of the bush and made a bee line for Black Hob Farm. How he got out without being seen is a mystery to me. And in less than an hour he was back again with the irate farmer, Brinley Davies, at his heels. He had then purposely drawn the attention of the watchers to himself, and had led them a fair old dance through the grounds before allowing himself to be captured. He had fought like a wild cat, and had badly marked some of their faces.

"By damn, pard!" he chuckled, "there was one great hulking fellow with a cast in his eye who kept on reaching out for my throat. I caught hold of his finger in my teeth and bit 'im right through to the bone. I'll lay he will carry the scars to his dying day."

And so we talked and slept and ate all that day and in the evening were refreshed like giants.

Discussing our present case, and leaving Antrobus and his gang out of the question, Jerry thought it would be best to lay a false trail over the border into Cardiganshire.

"We'll make it appear as if we are heading north, pard," he said. "There's some wild, mountainous country up Tregaron way, where a man could dodge the police for a year if he wanted to. We will lay that trail, and come back here and lie 'doggo' for a day or so. Then we'll push down to the sea to keep an eye on your friends."

I smiled delightedly. "Jerry, my boy," I laughed. "You ought to have been a general."

"No, pard," he protested. "It ain't cleverness on my part. It's sheer damned wickedness. You see, I'm used to this sort of thing. It comes like second nature. 'Set a thief to catch a thief' is an almighty true saying, pard. And I guess I'll put you up to a few dodges that'll help you get old 'Blue Specs' and his slimy crowd. 'E gives me the shivers does that bloke, pard. Straight, he does. And I, for one, shan't sleep quite easy until he's spoiling his snaky fingers by picking oakum."

Jerry got up off an upturned soap box that served for a chair and crossed to the cupboard. Pulling it away from the wall, he prized out a large stone. Inserting his arm right up to the shoulder he drew out a bottle.

"Whisky," he said. "And smuggled at that. Potheen from Ireland. Made in stills up in the Wicklow mountains and brought over here by me. Now we will have just a wee spot of this in our tea, and I'll tell you how it's done."

But before he told me this, he swore me to secrecy, so I cannot pass it along with this story. Suffice to say that it could be carried out with impunity, and that the chances of detection are, to say the least, remote.

"But mind you, pard," explained Jerry. "I do this for the fun of the thing as much as the profit. It's glorious fun landing a bundle you'd never believe."

"But nevertheless, it's wrong, Jerry, my lad," I observed. "I'm sent here with the express purpose of catching a smuggler."

Jerry jumped up in a fury. "By damn!" he roared, "you don't compare me to that damned soul-stealing and murdering swine. You don't mean that, pard? You don't mean that?"

The fury and the pleading in his voice each struggled for the mastery, and I was strangely moved.

"Easy, Jerry. Now, easy, my partner! Between men there must be plain speaking."

But it was a long time before I could pacify him. He was a strange mixture of goodness and vice, was

this companion of mine. The fact of the matter was that he had been living his headstrong mode of existence so long that it was a job to get him to see the difference between right and wrong. I do honestly believe, however, that his delinquencies were the outcome of a love of adventure more than pecuniary gain. Danger was the salt of his existence. Without it life would lose its savour.

That night we laid the false trail. Ten miles out and in. Fortunately, it passed off without great danger, though we had one or two narrow escapes of being seen at the wrong points. The main object of the scheme was to display ourselves at certain points on the way out, but to get back without being seen. This is a very much harder job than one would anticipate, even in well-covered country and in darkness. We had to cross the River Teify out and in, and this was a danger point.

When the police properly have their dander up, they have a nasty habit of appearing in unlikely places at all hours of the day or night. We did not mind in the least showing ourselves at a distance on the way out, which we did with impunity. This resulted in two small runs with very little danger to ourselves. But on the way back we had to move like otters. Choosing the darkest places, and moving with extreme caution, we worked our way back in sections. At one point we had to lie still for nearly an hour whilst a party of roysterers awaited the mending of a puncture. I was filled with apprehension lest it should be light before we won back to the

Gwaun Valley. But the phlegmatic Jerry gazed at the noisy gang with a sort of detached indifference, and merely grunted when they eventually drove off.

Crossing the river we were almost discovered by a policeman on a cycle. The road and the river at this point run parallel for about six miles. Fortunately we had just crossed the road before he rounded a bend. Dropping like water-rats, into the river, we crouched under the bank until we thought the danger had passed. Presently Jerry lifted a careful head, but quickly withdrew.

"Right under, pard," he whispered, "he's searching the bank."

Getting as far under the bank as we could, we both sank down until only the top of our heads showed above water. Gauging the distance from the swish of his feet through the grass on the bank, we took a deep breath and completely submerged ourselves. Through the clear water I saw the whitish light of his lamp as he passed over our heads. A moment later he passed us by, and our heads came up simultaneously.

We remained still until we heard his feet on the road as he returned for his cycle, then, like a couple of otters, shot off across the river.

Without further incident, we made our way back to the caves.

Then followed a period of inaction which sorely tried my patience. Fortunately, my experience as a deer-stalker stood me in good stead, otherwise I should have made the fatal blunder of venturing

out too early. I knew, from past experience, that the antlers are gained as much by waiting as by straight shooting. Many a fourteen-pointer has been lost through precipitancy. "Everything comes to him who waits" should be the deer-stalker's slogan.

So calling up all my hunter's craft, I possessed my soul in patience until such time as Jerry thought it fit to move.

It made things worse having no writing materials. During this enforced inactivity I could have prepared a full and detailed report for Sir Arnold. But I had to content myself with Jerry's promise of pencil and paper in our next hiding-place.

And, above all, I wanted to get into touch with Jackson. At the moment he was my only link with the world. I wanted to get in touch with him for several reasons. He would be sure to have news from Sir Arnold for me. And he would be able to give me some information, I felt sure, of Antrobus and his gang. Above all, I wanted copies of the newspapers, especially the local ones.

I voiced these these wants to Jerry Scant, who scratched his head thoughtfully.

"That will mean returning to Bat's Wood, pard," he said. "Jackson knows our little bolt hole there. I told him how to find it. He has probably been there already. But the problem is, pard, how the hell are we going to get there?"

"Can it possibly be done, Jerry?" I inquired. Jerry sighed, looked thoughtful and presently expectorated with great force.

"I don't say as how it can't be done, pard. There's a few things that are impossible. But it's a real corker, take it from me."

He got up and thrust his great hands into his trouser pockets, staring moodily into the fire. The leaping flames cast a grotesquely huge shadow behind him on the cave walls. So might one of the old-time Scottish clansmen have looked when planning a cattle-raid on the Lowlanders. I wondered at his ancestry, a point which was carefully shrouded in silence. He had just a faint trace of Scottish accent underlying the broad Pembrokeshire dialect. But upon this was superimposed colloquial expressions picked up in his wanderings. Not a few of them savoured of America, acquired when working with a Canadian Pacific railway gang, and with "sinkers" in California. Filling his short black clay, he lighted it with a brand from the fire, and fell to puffing furiously.

"Ye see, pard. This is what I had in mind. When I goes smugglin' I joins forces with two pals who have a fishing boat at Porth Carreg Headland. Porth Carreg is quite near Deadman's Bay. There's a cave half way up the cliffs. One end of it comes out in David Jonathan's barn. He owns the farm and his brother owns the boat. Between fishing and farming and a trifle of smugglin' they rub along pretty tolerable. There's no difficulty about making their place. There's good cover all the way and we can do it easy one night."

Thinking I saw a way I interrupted.

"Well there's only one thing for it, Jerry," I said, "and that is to take the Jonathans into our confidence."

"Up to a point, yes," agreed Jerry. "We have got to do that if we are to do any sea work. But I'm damned if either of 'em is going into my lime-kiln."

He displayed all the ferocity of a bear defending its young. I had no idea until then how great an honour it was for me to have been admitted to his retreat in Bat's Wood.

"I don't mind you and Jackson knowing it, pard," he growled, "but hanged if those rum-running Jonathans are going to clap their thieving eyes on it."

"But you trust them, Jerry?" I asked.

"Oh aye. I trust 'em all right so far as the smugglin' goes. They daren't say a word because of their own skins. But outside of that I'm on my own. and no one sees Bat's Wood kiln, police or no police, Antrobus or no Antrobus."

His blue jaw set itself at an ugly angle, and I knew that I could not change his mind were I to argue until Doomsday.

"Very well," I said, "then I must go myself——"

Jerry's bright eyes looked down on me uncommon quick, and his lips parted in a smile.

"Don't worry now, pard," he said, "leave it to old Jerry."

With that he squatted down beside me and passed over his pouch.

"Fill up, pard. Smoke is a great inspiration. And we'll need be mighty canny planning this."

So I filled my pipe, a twin of Jerry's which had been boiled before use. With a thoroughness which had characterised all his actions, Jerry had purposely refrained from buying me a new pipe.

"Everything in keeping, pard," he had said. "A trifle can upset your whole rig out. Ye must be Jerry Scant's pal down to the smallest detail."

It was this same thoroughness and attention to detail which had kept me from being recognised by Antrobus in Fox Pit House. It was this same thoroughness which would pull us through our future tasks.

We therefore discussed very fully the project of reaching Bat's Wood.

As Jerry had intimated, it would be an easy matter to get to the Jonathans' farm unobserved. The Gwaun Valley swept down in a slight curve to within half a mile of the sea, and a wooded arm reached conveniently out at this point to within a mile or so of our destination.

But to reach Bat's Wood a very different set of circumstances prevailed. To begin with, we should have to cross the barren slopes of Prescelly and Foel Eryr. Here only a skilful use of the folds in the ground could help us. The danger was not so great here, however, as near the wood. Once off the mountains we had a network of small lanes to cross, and small wall-bounded fields, with frequent farmhouses in the hollows.

We thought, at first, that it would be better for Jerry only to make the attempt, whilst I remained

hidden in our present retreat. I must say that I did not relish the prospect of staying in these caves alone. They were so uncanny, and the very darkness seemed pregnant with the mysterious and unknown rites of the dead and gone Druids. Put it how I will, I was mysteriously affected by this knowledge, and I only longed for the time when I could leave their echoing vastness behind for good. Jerry did not seem affected by this, but I do not imagine he knew so much about the Druids as I did.

And another fact obtruded itself unpleasantly into my mind. If Jerry were captured I did not know how to get out of the caves. Even Jerry, who was more or less used to them, had to go very carefully. Deep fissures opened unexpectedly at one's feet, and far below whispered the faint rush of water, so far below that it made one giddy to think of it. I mentioned this to Jerry, and it proved to be the deciding factor. At all events we would leave the Gwaun Valley caves together. Next we had to decide whether we would proceed first to the Jonathans' farm, and make a journey to Bat's Wood from there, or else to make Bat's Wood first and the Jonathans' after.

Eventually we decided to strike across the mountains to Bat's Wood first, and to lie up there during the day, and proceed next night to Porth Carreg.

So that night at eleven thirty saw us take farewell of those gigantic and sinister caves. I can honestly state that I, for one, was mighty glad to be rid of their company. Even the unholy atmosphere hanging

over Fox Pit House seemed preferable to their velvety hold. I had an uncomfortable feeling all the time I was in them that something was lying in wait for us, and I gave a heartfelt sigh of relief when we pushed through the dense circle of undergrowth and left their yawning black mouths behind.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH I MAKE A STARTLING DISCOVERY

If our journey into Cardigan laying a false trail was risky, then this one was doubly so. We could not afford to take the slightest risk of being seen by even the merest shepherd lad. Sliding down gulleys, scrambling up dry water-courses, forcing our way through acres of needle-pointed gorse, crawling along under the stone walls, and ever on the lookout for a stray farm dog or a belated shepherd, we made out way over miles of country. We were now down off the mountains, and although there was more cover, there was more likelihood of coming unawares on some farmer or his men. At intervals we crossed brown bogs of about a field's length across; not treacherous, like the bogs of Ireland, but sufficiently deep to make our progress laborious. I was perspiring from every pore. The close, humid night hung about us like a vapour bath. Sustained effort under such circumstances is a test to try the fittest body. I had always prided myself on being able to stalk a deer with the next man, but I found that there is a vast difference in being the hunter and being the quarry. I dare say that my constant adulation of Jerry Scant

is not understood by those who have not hunted in any shape or form. But it will be understood by those who have sat in one position for hours on end. Those who have stalked the king of the glens will recognise the almost overwhelming desire to brush off a fly from one's cheek. They will know what I mean when I state that there is an alliance between the irritating insect and the stag. The slightest involuntary movement gives one away as surely as a shout from a housetop. The perfect hunter steels himself to endure all physical discomforts. Dirt, scratches, blows, itchings, stingings, heat, cold, damp, weariness, sleepiness, cramp, exhaustion, all these and more have to be fought singly and individually by the hunter. How much more then shall the hunted endure?

I say then, without hesitation, that Jerry Scant was the finest exponent of the craft of the hunter I had ever met. His big frame slid with the noiselessness of a bird through bracken. He had as instinctive a knowledge of shadows as the badger. He scented danger points like the fox. He could worm his way through undergrowth like an adder. His senses of smell, hearing and sight were uncanny. Add to these natural gifts the cunning of the perfect poacher and you will realise that I followed a really great hunter. His courage and daring were superb; his strength great, and his heart as simple as a boy's, and with all the boy's natural joyous cunning. I say, then, that to Jerry Scant belongs the honour of these exploits. Without his specialised knowledge I should have been lost.

Hot, thirsty, exhausted almost to the point of prostration, I lay behind a bank beside Jerry. His warning hand was raised so I lay still, listening to the thumping of my heart. The bank bordered a lane and was topped with a low straggling hedge. Here, on the rounded shoulder of a ridge, the ground mist was absent. Down in the valley it swung like a lake. Presently I heard the far-off throb of a car.

"Still," hissed Jerry through clenched white teeth.

The hum of the engine drew nearer, and a white beam of light danced stiffly in the sky. I felt a chill steal over me. There was something sinister in this onrushing hum. It was not a sense of personal danger. I had got so used to Jerry's woodcraft that fear of discovery had faded into a subconscious background. Why then did I feel this vague alarm?

Jerry's face turned towards me, and I saw his tongue pass over his lips.

"Still," he whispered again.

He, too, had sensed this subtle warning of danger.

Nearer grew the silken hum of the powerful engine, and I realised, with a leaping thrill, that it was a Daimler car. The white beams suddenly resolved themselves into liquid rafters of light as the lamps emerged from the mist. At the same time the hum of the engine changed to a lower pulsing throb as gears were changed up. I now heard the hissing rush of tyres over a gritty surface, almost as if they were sweeping through shallow water.

Impelled by an instinct stronger than myself I raised my head and peered through the stumps of the hedge.

As I had anticipated it was the Daimler saloon. The Nubian was driving, his huge form looming up against the light inside the body of the car. I could not see his face but merely the outline of his bullet head and gorilla-like jaw. He drove like a fury, the big car rocking and swaying along the narrow lane.

But my eyes were drawn towards the figure in the saloon. Huddled in the corner, with white face gleaming under the roof-light, small gloved hands nervously clenching, and large eyes staring tragically out of the window, was the Lady Celia Ferlie. She was dressed more severely than I had ever noticed in her, and a ridiculously small handkerchief clasped in one gloved hand seemed to indicate that it had been used for drying tears. The mouth was set in a straight but tremulous line, defiantly but pathetically brave.

In that moment I knew one perfectly astounding thing. I loved Celia Ferlie. Without thought I leaped to my feet, only to fall back as a thousand lights sprang before my eyes and a numbing shock to my brain paralysed my faculties.

. . . . .

Struggling back through a whirling maze of stars I saw Jerry's anxious face.

"You poor blighted idiot!" he growled.

"Why," I stammered, "what's happened? What hit me?"

For answer Jerry lifted his leg-of-mutton first.

"This, you damn fool," he ground out. "And it'll dot you again if you're going to behave like a love-bitten calf. You want a fortnight's hard, with old Sergeant Mockford chasing ye around at the double! By the suffering piper of Methuselah I could goldarn ye for a perishing fool!

Then I got on to my hind legs. He might be the one and only Jerry Scant. He might be as strong as Beelzebub himself. He might be a *pro tem.* partner with special powers and prerogatives. But I would be hanged if he thought he was head cook and bottle washer. I talked him up and down in his own vernacular. I let him have it, as the saying is, with both hands. As he fell back step after step I followed him until he toppled over backwards in a bed of thistles.

"Holy Moses!" I finished up. "Do you think I care a tinker's curse for a few pettifogging policemen when Lady Celia Ferlie is in danger. I would see 'em all to——"

"Right, pard," muttered Jerry from his bed of thistles. "You are right, pard! But go carefully now! No good losing our tempers. We have each got our points of view. I don't know Lady Celia Ferlie and you don't know old Sergeant Mockford."

So we resumed our way, each consumed with his own thoughts. Jerry's, no doubt, straying towards

a county jail. But mine, mine were straying towards a crumpled, white-faced girl huddled in the corner of a swift-moving saloon car. Alone! Pitifully alone!

How I finished that dreadful journey I knew not. All I knew was that, just before dawn, I staggered after Jerry into the lime-kiln, whacked, absolutely whacked. My trembling legs would have refused to carry me any farther. I was at the limit of endurance. And even the iron-framed Jerry, inured and used to such hardships, was tottering on his feet as he crossed the kiln to sink down on a bench.

"Gawd strap my pony's old sides! I'm all in, pard. Can't move another blinking step. Flat on your back now, pard. Here's a blanket. Flat on your back and rest!"

For an hour there was absolute silence in the kiln, and then Jerry arose softly, and, with all his usual feline stealthiness, went outside to reconnoitre.

In a little while he came back bearing a canful of water. He set this beside me.

"Jail breakfast this morning, pard. Just dry bread and water. It'll get us in training for a spell." He chuckled sardonically.

"The grub department's broken down, pard. We get nothing now until we make the Jonathans' place to-night. By Jehosophat! What's that?"

Startled, I raised myself, and, following his glance across the dim interior, I made out a number of small parcels stacked neatly in a corner under the bench.

In our thankfulness to have arrived at our destination, we had momentarily forgotten Jackson. He, stout fellow, had found out our retreat. Eagerly I pounced on the parcels, and a moment later we were undoing them. A cold fowl, a meat pie and two bottles of stout were the first things we unpacked. The prosaic Jackson never overlooked the inner man.

Jerry had recovered his good spirits, and was chuckling like a schoolboy opening Christmas parcels.

"Pard," he said, "I've dotted him in the eye and you on the chin. May the good Mother forgive me. You are both sportsmen to the last ounce, and old Jerry Scant is a foolish, frightened old woman."

But I was too busy to attend to him. Eagerly I searched the parcels until I came across what I wanted—a roll of newspapers and a pad of letters.

Searching through the letters first, I came on one in the familiar crabbed and angular hand. This was from the Chief. Although it was hardly light enough to discern the writing even when peering closely at it, I tore it open, and, taking it to the entrance, pored over the contents. But I had to give it up until it grew lighter. We could not risk lighting a candle, so I had to possess my soul in patience.

"Breakfast first. Pleasure after, pard," said Jerry.

So we had breakfast whilst the awakening birds began to pipe and sing, the deep-throated blackbird,

the twittering tits; the cheery yink-yanking chiff-chaff, and the flinty clacking furze-chat. All about was full of bursting life. The whole of the wood seemed to stretch itself, until the timber started and cracked.

Jerry beamed at me good-humouredly, but raised a finger for silence.

"Quietly now, pard," he whispered, "the day is here."

The interior of our kiln was lighted up like the interior of a church. Drawing the packet of letters and papers towards me I first perused the one from Sir Arnold Withers. When I had read it I felt a heap better. He was a marvellously cunning old fox. Give him a mere hint of danger and he was away laying a false trail with all the cunningness of Reynard. I chuckled as I read certain passages of his letter.

He had received my report and had arranged the matter of the "recovery of my body." Everything would be hushed up very swiftly in the best "departmental" manner. Small notices of my "death by drowning" would be inserted in some of the leading papers. There would be no fuss, and his department would outwardly pretend to know nothing exciting about it. Inwardly the greatest possible amount of worry would be displayed. A special man would be sent down and would allow himself to be suitably hoodwinked by Antrobus. Archie Wemyss would be sent up to the West Coast of Scotland on a false trail. With the exception of the special agent sent

down to investigate my death, all suspicion would be diverted from Wales. Scotland would occupy all their time. Antrobus, as a matter of fact, had laid a false scent in Scotland himself. The Service had not been taken in with this, but it would come in very handy now. I chuckled. This was the Arnold Withers of old. Apparently guileless, he was as full of guile as an egg was of meat. He used the very red tape of office to make snares for his opponents. Sending out men here and there to investigate trivial details of little real importance, he carefully avoided a clash with his enemies until he was ready to strike a mortal blow. He had dragged a dozen and one red herrings across Antrobus's own trail, and had lulled him into a sense of false security. But secretly, unknown to any but himself and me, he had arranged for two aeroplanes to be held in readiness, and would be able at a moment's notice to put his hand on half-a-dozen picked men and pilots. "A Flying Squad," he wrote, "which will snaffle the Cocaine Gang before breakfast one morning. All we require is a word from you."

I quote one other extract to show you how shrewd he was.

"I have not troubled," he wrote, "to look up your friend Antrobus's pedigree. You see I am not supposed to know that such a person even exists. If I call for dossiers it may get around. I notice you say he is influential and 'in the know.' I have, however, found out two things about him quite by accident. (I smiled.) First, he was in China when you were

there. He was a very energetic but rather shady company promoter on the prowl. Was a personal friend of Doctor Fu Sun Ling's, the Shanghai opium merchant. Secondly, he has been in Africa, somewhere around the bottom corners of Egypt. Cannot make out what he was doing there. Some talk of his having studied the lives of the witch doctors of a little known negro tribe for the base of a film. This may be all junk, but it is worth keeping in mind."

Thus Sir Arnold Withers. Bear in mind he knew nothing of the dreadful episode in Bat's Wood when the actor El Draco had been so horribly done to death. This occurred after my report.

I put his letter down and glanced through the papers. The local ones were the most interesting. These recorded in different paragraphs my mysterious disappearance, the finding of my clothes on the beach, the presumption that I had gone in for a swim, and had been swept out to sea by the treacherous currents. The local scribe recalled other instances of this nature, metaphorically patted Antrobus on the back for his attempt to dissuade me from bathing.

A more recent edition contained a brief notice of the finding of "my body" clad in a much torn and blood-soiled bathing-suit. The body had been badly bruised and lacerated by rocks but had been "recognised" by my butler, Jackson, and a "friend" from England. The local scribe "understood that the deceased, who since the war had practically lived the life of a recluse, had no relatives."

"Thank you," I murmured, turning to the main item of news, namely the "suicide" of El Draco, the popular film actor. The *W...tern Chronicle* "regretted to announce the tragedy which had overwhelmed a popular and rising young screen artist. It recalled his greatest rôles, and dwelt with a certain unctuous pride on the fact that El Draco had acted in two films portraying Welsh history and had been engaged on a third. It commiserated with the great Antrobus, the wizard director, who was doing so much to build up a British Hollywood, and hoped he would be able to replace his brilliant but unfortunate young actor, who had so evidently held him in high esteem."

Knowing the full circumstances, which the paper could not, I felt my gorge rise. The vision of Antrobus as he had appeared on that dreadful night came to my mind. I saw again his sinister, hatchet face floating, as it were, between the smooth trunks of two beeches. I saw again the animal curl of the lips, and heard that devilish laugh, the short hard laugh so like the bark of a fox.

There was also in the latest local paper a most entertaining account, a whole column in fact, of the nocturnal exploits of two desperate tramps. Curiously enough, although in each of the three episodes the name of Antrobus was dragged in, the incidents were so widely variant that they absolutely refused to connect up in the mind. One seemed entirely irrelevant to the other. What, for instance, did the suicide of an actor have to do with a couple of thieving

tramps. The local paper commented on the fact that we were last seen in Cardiganshire, and sincerely hoped we would stay there. This cheered me up wonderfully, and I laughed silently to think that two people at least would read this column with mixed feelings. One would be Antrobus, the other Sir Arnold Withers. The first would gnaw his lower lip and clench his thin supple fingers in baffled annoyance. The latter would laugh until the tears rolled down his face, and I would lay a new Bank of England one pound note to a Kerensky rouble that his next letter asked me to send up to London a brace of rabbits.

An exclamation from Jerry broke in on these pleasant thoughts. Looking up, I saw that he held in each hand a neat but useful-looking pistol.

"Gosh, pard," he whispered, "this is the best turn your bloke has done us. What little beauties! I'm a good judge of a wepping. An' I reckon with them two, that, at sixty yards, I could drill old Blue Specs as full of holes as a Gouda cheese."

Jerry was balancing them lovingly in his hand. Looking at his face, I realised that next time he and Antrobus met there was going to be trouble. His jaw was as ugly as a chisel, and deep in his eyes was a peculiar leaping gleam which danced and flickered ominously. The feel of those two beautifully finished and powerful weapons in his hands had affected him in the same way that raw meat affects a lion.

"See, pard," he hissed, "I'll show you a trick I learnt it down in Oklahoma, in one of the bad spots."

He slipped the automatic from his right hand into his pocket. The other he laid aside.

"Watch!" he whispered.

With his dark eyes fixed hard on mine he held out his right arm rigid from the shoulder. The fingers of his huge hand were quivering.

Suddenly he made a slight motion with his left hand. For the merest fraction of a second my eyes left his. When I looked again the gun was lying in the palm of that rigid outstretched arm.

"Dead," he said. "Bet a thousand flasks o' rum you would have been dead the instant you removed your eyes from mine. Bet a million flasks——"

"Righto, Jerry," I said quietly, "I quite believe it. I guess you would have fired from the pocket?"

He nodded.

"I learnt that trick," he said, "from an old Puritan in Oklahoma. He was a prayerful man, with a strong sense of right and wrong. He was usually in the right, and his enemies in the wrong. And nobody could gainsay him, he was so almighty smart with his gun."

I agreed that he must have been a particularly nasty man to have for an enemy. We English are good with a sporting gun or a rifle, but when it comes to using the pistol, the American has got us cold. Personally I have a horror of the automatic. It

seems such an unfair weapon to use. I had to carry one on certain classes of work, but I thanked Providence that, up to now, I had never had to use it. As the American says, "you can carry a revolver all your life and never need it, but when you do need it you need it damn badly." By the look on Jerry's face I judged that he had been in places where it was as necessary an adjunct to one's apparel as trousers. After memorising the contents of the letters I tore them into small shreds and buried them at the back of the kiln. I would have prefered to burn them, but we dared not risk a light. This done, I left a message in code for Jackson, telling him our destination, and suggested that he changed his address for Fiskwick. After that we both had a good long sleep. We were seasoned old campaigners in this respect, for we could sleep on the proverbial needle, as the saying is, and at any time. This is an asset which only comes through experience. Your novice in sport or war is too keyed up to sleep until he is absolutely worn down by sheer physical exhaustion. Long into the afternoon we slept like dogs. When I was awake I noticed Jerry sometimes opened a cautious eye which looked pensively at the opening. I knew that on these occasions his hunter's sixth sense was busily at work. If nothing stirred the eye would close again, and he would stretch himself luxuriously like a dog by a fire.

Before evening we arose, and had a meal which passed for tea and supper combined. Spreading out a map I followed our course since our ignominious

exit from Fox Pit House. I was astounded at the distance we had covered, especially on our last trek. I have a good eye for a map, and as I followed Jerry's slow moving finger I marvelled anew at his uncanny knowledge of the lay of ground. Judging by the contours, it was impossible to have chosen a better protected route. Then he pointed out the route we were to traverse that night.

"First, pard," he whispered, "we make for the Vale of Oaks. There's fine cover there. Then we'll strike up towards the mountain through what the gipsies call the Valley of Crooked Heather. It's a hell of a place to travel through, little dark, boggy holes, where you drop in up to your middle. But there's bonny cover, and we shan't meet a living soul. Then we cross the bottom end of Bryn Berian. which the gipsies still call the Hill of the Kites. As wild a place as you would like to see. Then it's easy going, pard. We get in to the bottom end of the Gwaun Valley, and cut along down through the groves. A couple of miles of that and a few easy fields, and we are in Jonathans' farm."

I will not weary you with the details of this journey. It was much like the others with the exception that the latter half was much easier. I got pretty short of wind and temper in the Valley of Crooked Heather, but the cool breezes of Bryn Berian restored both, and as we neared our goal I felt as light-hearted as a boy out sparrow trapping.

The Jonathans' farm I found to be a big barn of a place, more like a fort than a farm. The lands

were shrunk to fifty acres where they once had been a thousand, and these fifty bordered the cliffs. But the house was a wonder, and so were the owners. David Jonathan was a tall, angular, red-bearded Celt, with hard blue eyes set rather close together over a high-bridged nose. When he looked at you he did so without turning his head, and indeed without moving a muscle. Whilst talking to Jerry in a thin, high-pitched voice, his eyes frequently flicked across to me, and regarded me with a deep wariness from under shaggy ginger eyebrows. His brother, who was also known as David Jonathan, with the additional appellation of "bach," which means little, was a small, wiry, dark man. He had flashing dark eyes and flashing white teeth, bared frequently in a flashing smile. His voice was soft and caressing, and he had a nimble wit. He liked a pretty story, had a keen sense of humour, was a teetotaller, but I was informed was inordinately fond of the opposite sex. Both were bachelors, the tall and older brother from fear and hate, the small quick, smiling younger one from choice. The former was dour and suspicious, the latter carefree and dashing. Yet, curiously enough, the latter was the cautious partner who laid the careful and elaborate plans for the spirit smuggling, and the older dour and suspicious Celt was the fellow who actually ran the gauntlet. A curious pair. I could form no liking for either of them. They were not like my Jerry Scant. And as antipathies are usually mutual, I suppose they did not care for me. At this juncture I did not feel inclined to take them

into complete confidence so I allowed myself to be known as "Nobby Clark," Jerry Scant's butty. Jerry and I wanted a boat on our own. We did not want the Jonathans with us. But to this neither would agree, and eventually we had to give way and allow them to make their own arrangements. Afterwards I realised that this was really the better plan, but I was not yet accustomed to the Jonathans, nor they to me.

We sat in a rough stone kitchen which gave an impression of being hewn out of solid rock. I discovered, later, that the outer walls of the house were nearly six feet thick all the way round. We sat around a polished oak refectory table that would have fetched a nice round figure at Christie's. The two Jonathans were clothed in nightshirts, overcoats and slippers, for we had spoiled their night's sleep. They kept no indoor servants, but the wife of a farm labourer came in each day and "did" for them. We were therefore all on our own, and under the light of a hurricane lamp hanging from a beam I daresay we looked as villainous a group of plotters as was ever painted on canvas. The elder David Jonathan drank whisky neat out of a tumbler. I had never met a man who drank so much. Nor did I know of anyone on whom it had less effect. He drank neat spirit in gulps, but although he must have consumed half a bottle in the hour we sat talking, I saw no unsteadiness, nor noticed any thickness in the high-pitched voice. The younger one, David Jonathan Bach smoked cigarettes in a chain.

Under the frigid scrutiny of the elder, and the quick, intuitive glances of the small one, we had the devil's own job, as the saying is, to keep the real object of our visit secret. I realised that, sooner or later, they would have to be told, but I wanted a word with Jerry alone before we did this. There was too much at stake to allow my real identity to be known indiscriminately.

I left Jerry to do the talking. He told them a cock and bull story of our wanting to get over to Ireland, and that we wanted the boat for a week or more. As I have mentioned, neither of them would consent to this, and we saw that further pressure would but serve to renew their suspicions of me.

So presently we rose, without having settled anything definitely, and, reaching down the hurricane lamp, we were conducted to our new quarters.

This proved to be the best of Jerry's bolt holes. As a matter of fact it was a veritable stronghold. The cave itself could have been known only to the coastguards and a few fishermen who collect seabirds' eggs along the cliffs. But even they did not know of its back door entrance, reached through the cellars of the Jonathans' farm. It was as perfect a smugglers' den as could have been devised, and, being a Sussex man, and therefore having smugglers' blood somewhere in my veins, I was thrilled to the core. This I grant was not compatible with my mission, for was I not here to stop smuggling. But then Antrobus was smuggling such vile stuff. I could have found it in my heart to have forgiven him smuggling

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diamonds (procured from certain toughs "working" the new Namaqualand fields), I could have forgiven him smuggling fine silks (procured by some unknown means from his Chinese and Indian friends). But the cocaine and opium. Bah! The very thought of that traffic made me feel sick.

CHAPTER X

TELLS OF THE INSCRUTABLE SEA

THE sea, limitless, smiling, sullen, playful, wrathful and always merciless! What a wonder there is in the sea, cruel as death, yet seductive as music.

Here, perched in an eyrie like an eagle, I could look sheer down the black and red cliff and see the great green Atlantic rollers expend themselves in a creamy froth of impotent foam at the end of their four thousand mile journey. When the wind blew, with his rough breath, on their backs, they came in like raging war-horses, their manes streaming behind them, prancing, leaping and hurling themselves on the iron-bound coast in a trampling thunder.

At night, when the red ball of the sun sank into it and sent the white fogs steaming up out of the unknown, what mysteries lay shrouded in the wastes! At night, when the moon rose and gleamed through a violet light, what forms stalked on the face of the deep! At midnight in midsummer, when a closeness lay over everything like a clammy hand, what signified that low mutter like thunder?

Where did the cormorants go when they flew straight out from the rock? Where rested the great northern diver when his bubbling cry came from the heart

of the deep far out? Whence came the seals that basked on the flat ledges by day and barked like dogs in the night? Who knew the path of the clumsy porpoises? Who could visualise the days of the tireless albatross, the bird which hung suspended from Heaven by an invisible thread for weeks on end? What made the sea gulls so plaintive, with their high wailing notes and white wings? Truly there are more things in earth and sea, especially sea, than dreamed of in man's philosophy!

"Hell!" ejaculated Jerry. "Look at that, pard!"

About two miles out, from behind one of the small islands, there shot a motor boat. Even at that distance I could see that it was moving at a prodigious speed. With the prow lifted over a creaming line of foam, it seemed to skim upon the water rather than move through it. Lying at full length behind the parapet, chins in cupped hands, we watched that swift-moving craft skim across the mouth of Trueth Bay, pass the black needle of Stack Rock, skirt the Wild Goose Race and head for open sea. Once, when it was directly opposite us, we caught the throb of powerful engines. Then their loud thrum faded out, as the mass of Stack Rock intervened. Emerging from the other side, the boat headed out to sea and the hum grew fainter, and presently died away altogether. Soon the boat was a mere speck, looking like one of those swift-flying birds who trail their feet in the blue water.

Jerry and I looked at each other, and it was a hundred to one that we both thought the same thing.

Jerry expectorated violently.

"A million flasks of rum to a cork that's the boat, pard," he ejaculated. "Bet two million flasks o' rum——"

"Righto, Jerry," I said. "You would win! That's the little fellow we have got to search!"

"But where the hell do they keep her, pard? We have been up and down the whole damned coastline. And if anyone tells me I don't know the coast he's a flaming liar. A flaming liar, pard. I tell you that straight!"

He rose to his feet softly and stretched himself like a great cat. He was a very queer man was Jerry Scant. Turning around swiftly, he drew back his upper lip, uncovering a row of strong white teeth.

"Hell," he fumed, "to think that a long, lean blue-spectacled cuss from a city can beat me at my own game. Why," he continued aggressively, "I know every cove and creek and islet and bay around this coast. I know all the rocks by their names, all the shoals, the currents, the beaches, the caves and every damned thing there is to be known about 'em, and this long herring-gutted bag of bones and wickedness can hide a boat under my very nose and me not see it. Hell and Carmarthen! The man's in league with the devil!"

I chuckled. It was strangely amusing to see Jerry Scant at a loss. Usually he was so deadly efficient. Nothing seemed too difficult for him to tackle. Witness our escape from the police, and our subsequent

midnight journey across country. Only an uncanny knowledge of the country, coupled with scoutcraft of the highest order, had pulled us through. And the honour of this fell solely upon Jerry. Yet here he was baffled.

For a week we had searched the coast in the Jonathans' boat for sign of a suspicious motor boat or yacht. We had taken the Jonathans into part confidence, telling them only enough to whet their appetite for more.

Jerry had conveyed to them very tactfully the need for utmost secrecy. After laying just so many of our cards on the table as we considered necessary he had risen to his feet, with this final warning.

"Now look here, you two bright smuggling beauties," he said, "you breathe a word of what you have heard and I'll hand your names and addresses to the police. See?"

They both had seen.

The elder, the tall, dour Celt, with the furtive close-set eyes had gone a little pale, and he had smiled like a cat who has had its tail pulled.

"Very good, Jerry fawr: and your name and address as well, eh?"

His slate grey eyes flicked to me and back to Jerry. But Jerry was no whit abashed.

"My name, yes, friend David, but not my address. No! Haw! Haw! Haw! Not my address, David. Not my address!"

After this they both "saw" better than ever, and

when it was made clear to them that there would be money in it, their loyalty was assured.

So we had set out the very next night after our arrival. Both the Jonathans came with us, or perhaps it would be fitter to say that we accompanied the Jonathans. Each night Jerry and I crept into their boat, which was moored in a narrow and secluded creek, and the Jonathans would get the boat out to sea. All the while we were in sight of land, Jerry and I lay in the bottom. To all intents and purposes the Jonathans were out night fishing. Occasionally, we passed other boats bent on similar business, but these we gave a wide berth. The Jonathans, we found, were not popular with the other fishermen. They were always aloof, never mixing with the crowd. This was all to the good, and suited our purposes admirably.

I shall never forget those long nights spent on the sea in the Jonathans' boat. Jerry lay in the bottom like a log, patient as doom. Under his orders the boat was sailed in all points of the compass. We made a tour of all the islands off the coast. Skomer and Skokholm and Ramsey and Gate Holm, islands first named by the fierce Norsemen who, centuries ago, blazed a trail through these Western seas. All along this coast their path can be traced. The -Wicks. the -Eyes and the -Holms portray their passing as clearly as the slot of an animal. Centuries ago those cruel but courageous raiders had explored these same creeks that we were now searching so diligently. Thither they had

carried the fire, and the sword, and their dread torture Blood Eagle.

And I was after a pirate, equally cruel, equally merciless, equally courageous, diabolically clever, and as mysterious as the sea itself.

Night after night we scoured the seas, night after night we searched the coves and sounds. We searched the hidden creeks around the islets, the steep sinister creeks along the coast. Greatly daring, we had pushed into Deadman's Bay, and had run right into the little inner bay where was the old disused quarry. Jerry and I had lain under some strong smelling nets whilst the Jonathans fished. We had felt our scalps tingle as we had heard Antrobus's challenge from the top of the cliff.

"Now then, you! Hi! you fishermen! Don't you know this is private water?" The red-haired craggy Celt had risen to his feet livid with anger.

"Private water, indeed, Mr. Antrobus. I know you and your kind very well. A lot of wicked heathen actors and actresses. You ought to be turned out of the country. And trying to interfere with the lawful rights of poor fishermen! I'll denounce you in Chapel, you child of the Evil One! I'll—I'll—I'll——"

Here his wrath seemed to choke him, and he sat heavily down. Then the small, lively, dark-haired brother had a go.

"Look you here, Mr. Antrobus," he said, "my brother is very easily upset. He has little English, and he doesn't mean quite all what he says! But

you cannot turn us out of here, Mr. Antrobus. If we want to fish here, we shall fish. That is the truth, indeed!"

I had never known Antrobus so completely at a loss. He walked up and down the cliff in a towering temper. He raised his long skinny arms to the skies and cursed in various languages. Presently he was joined by the Nubian, and I thrilled as I heard Antrobus speak to him in his own tongue.

"Find out where they live," he said, "and then where they keep their boat. Cut it adrift, sink it or burn it, whichever is easiest, but prevent them coming here at all costs. They are only a couple of ignorant fishermen, but they might see something that is not good for them, then we should have to kill them. Go!"

The Nubian faded into the night, leaving Antrobus staring silently down at us. The Jonathans fished on: the elder darting his shifty grey eyes over every part of the quarry, the younger smoking a cigarette as if he had forgotten all about the nasty-tempered tall man on the cliff top.

Jerry and I lay still as death under the nets wondering whether Antrobus could see us through the chinks. The next night we returned to the creek and the night following, but we saw nothing out of the ordinary, and certainly no trace of either motor boat or yacht.

To say that we were sorely disappointed is not putting it nearly strongly enough. Jerry, in fact, was almost heartbroken. He had boasted of his

knowledge of this coast, and had said he would find out the hiding-place in three nights at the most. But he had not been able to fulfil this promise, and here was the sixth night gone.

After the conversation overheard between Antrobus and the Nubian, which I had faithfully translated for the Jonathans, a strict watch was kept on the boat night and day. The dour, craggy-browed Jonathan had surprised one of Antrobus's men prowling around his boat the very next day. They wasted no time did that gang. I gathered from the account that the canny, suspicious Welshman had offered no violence, but he had threatened a visit to the police station at Abergwaun. He had insisted on having the prowler's name and address. At first a wrong one was given, so Jonathan had hazarded a guess and the culprit had to own up to it. Once he had obtained this, the crafty old fisherman had made it perfectly clear that if anything happened to his boat he would go immediately to the police and lay information against Antrobus. He said that he had fished in every creek along the coast, and was not going to be bluffed off any particular one because of a Londoner's fads for privacy.

I laughed when I heard of it. I guessed that Antrobus would be fuming. As for the poor unfortunate devil who had allowed himself to be caught I would not have stood in his shoes for a pile of sovereigns. Antrobus had a peculiar way of dealing with failures, a most unpleasant way of dealing with failures, especially traitors. I remem-

bered the death of El Draco, and shuddered. Never should I forget that appalling scream as the agony of the poison shook the poor wretch through and through.

Well, that was one danger half averted, anyway. A sound boat was to Jerry and me as necessary as bread. Without it, our chances of success were finally destroyed. Antrobus could hardly take the risk of damaging it now without drawing unwelcome attention to himself. But the thing which worried us more than anything else was our failure to find where Antrobus kept his motor boat. You can understand then why Jerry drew back his upper lip and grinned like a trapped pole-cat. Here, in broad daylight, was Antrobus's motor launch flying about the sea as if training for a race for the world's cup. Night after night we had searched the whole coast without a glimpse of it. Yet here it was flaunting itself in front of us like a plover when you approach her nest.

"That craft, pard," said Jerry, "belongs to no one in Pembrokeshire. It's a stranger. And it belongs to old Blue-Specs. as sure as my name is Scant!"

I lay watching the swift moving craft now a mere dot on the horizon. One by one a series of ideas filtered into my brain. The thing was so ridiculously simple that I laughed. Jerry growled like an angry dog.

"Can't see what the hell you've got to laugh at," he grumbled.

"Jerry," I said quietly, "we are a couple of born idiots."

He looked at me quizzically and his rough face broke into a smile.

"Out with it, pard," he said, "what's the idea?"

I chuckled. "How fast is that boat travelling, Jerry?" I asked.

He scratched his head thoughtfully.

"It's a most deceiving thing to calculate, pard, but I should say roughly twenty-five knots."

"Good," said I. "Now at that rate how long do you think it would take it to cross to Ireland?"

Jerry let out a laugh like the explosion of a blasting charge.

"By the shade of Sir John Perrott, you've hit the nail again, pard! Oh! But you are the great lad as the Irish say. And to think that I have been poking my nose into every little hole and corner around this coast and not thinking that Ireland is only fifty miles away. "

"Do you think the Jonathans have an atlas, Jerry?" I asked.

"Atlas! They'll have more than that, pard. They'll have large scale maps of this coast and probably of Wexford and Wicklow as well. They don't go blindly into the rum smuggling game, pard."

"Good man," said I. "Slip along now, Jerry, and bring back all the maps you can lay hold of."

In less than half an hour he was back with a dozen worn but good maps. A brief study of these gave strong support to my theory. Careful measurements

showed me that the distance from Abergwaun to Rosslare Harbour was but fifty-four miles. A crossing bisected the main shipping lines at a point about twenty miles off the Pembrokeshire coast. I could now visualise the whole operations with perfect clearness. Antrobus had a small gang, the actual runners, stationed somewhere along the Wexford coast, probably retired gentlemen whose interest was in yachting and motor boat racing. I had no doubts but what we should find more boats than one. Antrobus was not the type of man to put all his eggs in one basket. I laughed at the simplicity of it, and wondered why it had never struck me before. The men on the other side would probably be posing as retired naval officers, or at least men of that calibre. They would be bachelors and would be renting a little place on the cliffs. Every morning they would be seen going down to their boats. And sometimes at night as well. Storm and sunshine, rain or wind mattered not to them: their whole lives would be centred on their boats. There is no one quite so fanatical as your yachtsman. He will even aspire to sailing a little boat on the Serpentine, or the Canoe Lake at Southsea. No one thinks any less of him for reverting to this second childhood, for he explains that all knowledge of sea craft springs first from the experimental stage. So no one would take a second glance at these enthusiasts on the Wexford coast. If they found pleasure in tossing about in the St. George's Channel all day, well—who wished to prevent them? And if they were sometimes away all night who cared so long

as the boat came back as she went? Nothing was brought into Ireland, no cargo, illicit or otherwise was landed. The same old gentleman in the navy blue tunic, white trousers and peaked cap stepped ashore. In less than a month, they would be familiar sights. In three months they would be an institution.

I propounded my ideas to Jerry.

"Pard," he said, "you are about right. It's the only way, they could do it. A fisherman is not so conspicuous as a yachtsman, but a poor Irish fisherman could not afford a motor boat. Of course," he continued, "there's the big noises, the trawler owners, like the trawler owners of Milford Haven, men of money and ships, some of 'em owning a fleet of twenty. But the trawlers have recognised ports of call, same as a cargo boat. If one of the trawlers was seen putting in to Deadman's Bay, for instance, she would be under suspicion at once. Oh, no, pard, trawlers are too clumsy, too easy to keep an eye on, and your little fisherman is too small. You've struck the one and only way."

"I believe so, Jerry. Let's have a look at those shipping lines."

So we concentrated on the map again. As everybody knows, the bulk of the South American shipping passes up the St. George's Channel *en route* for Liverpool. There were other established lines, such as Liverpool—New York and Liverpool—Lisbon. But I knew full well that the type of shipping involved would be the small foreign-owned cargo boat. The

little tramps which traded between the great shipping centre and the little obscure ports on the fringes of the world, they were the culprits. It was, of course, impossible that they could touch port before unloading themselves of a portion of their cargo: the dangerous portion. Where could there be a better spot than the wild St. George's Channel? They would get off the main trade routes, a little into the Pembrokeshire side maybe, and then disgorge.

Jerry sat down on an inverted cube-sugar box and leaning against the cave wall with hands on hips, surveyed me through his hard, bright eyes whilst a grin stretched his mouth from ear to ear.

"Pard!" he interrupted, "before you go any farther, let me make a proposition. After this little game's through, how about a little 'bootlegging' on the American side? With a tortuous brain like yours we'd make our fortunes in less than a year. How about it now, pard?"

"Jerry," I said, "you know you are a wicked old sinner."

"Ah! But look at the fun we would have, pard. I bet we would make old Uncle Sam sit up and take notice. You and me and the two Jonathans, pard. Just think of it. We would be invincible. We would keep the 'tambourine a-rowlin'."

There you have Jerry Scant at his dare-devil best. "Ah, but look at the fun we'd have." That was his main inducement—the fun we would have.

That little picture remained in my mind long after all others had faded. The small cave, with its small blue opening to the sea, the sound of midsummer waves coming up like the wind through poplars, the plaintive mewing of sea-birds, and, lastly, Jerry sprawled before me like some old-time buccaneer, his merry dark eyes dancing with glee. "Ah, but look at the fun we would have."

"Jerry, old sportsman," said I, "we are likely to have all the fun we shall want before this job is through. It looks all plain sailing, but I can see some bad water ahead. It's a lone job, Jerry. We cannot call in official help till the last moment. Antrobus has got his spies in all sorts of places. At the least suspicion our bird will fly. The first false step we take sends us down the precipice as surely as stepping off that parapet."

"What's the next move, pard?"

"Ireland, Jerry. And I'm hanged if I can see how we can manage it. You and I are needed here. We have to keep an eye upon Antrobus, he is the chief bird. The Jonathans might do at a pinch."

"How about Jackson?" asked Jerry.

"The very thing," I replied. "As it happens he has a relative of sorts over there. I could never quite find out what manner of relative. Jackson's a deep man. He should be along to-night."

"Jackson's a great lad," muttered Jerry. "There's nothing I'd like better than a trip to Ireland with him."

I laughed. "So that's the scheme, is it? Well, I'm afraid it will not materialise this time, Jerry. We have plenty to do this side. I want to have a good look around that quarry in Deadman's Bay from the land side. Think it can be managed?"

"Easy as falling off a log, pard. But no knocking off bags of sugar," he added maliciously.

CHAPTER XI

A VISIT FROM THE ENEMY

THAT night at about ten-thirty, one of the Jonathans came down to the cave to say that Jackson had arrived. I had by now become accustomed to the Jonathans, and had learnt that we could trust them. They, on their part, had learnt that they could trust us. They were queer, suspicious folk, especially the tall, dour one with the sly moving eyes. Actually they were the best kind of guardians we could have had. Any stranger calling would be greeted with a cold hostility that chilled the bone. The little short one with the quick flicking wit, and the tall one with the hard searching questions, were an ideal pair.

We followed the younger Jonathan along the passage which led to the house, and presently were shaking hands with Jackson.

He looked, I thought, a little worried. This was unlike Jackson and I inquired the cause.

"The Lady Celia, sir, poor girl!"

I started, and my face drained white.

Jackson watched me out of his shrewd blue eye.

"She is all right, sir," he continued, "but is suffering badly."

The sense of his remarks suddenly struck me like a blow, and I felt a curious sensation of mingled joy and pity surge up in my heart.

I was conscious of four pairs of eyes fixing themselves on my face, and fought to regain my composure.

"Er, you are certain she is in no danger, Jackson?" I asked brusquely.

Jackson's eye met mine. "She is quite well, sir," he said.

Came again that sensation of fear knocking at my heart, but I had now got myself under control.

"We have work to do," was all I said.

Jerry let out his breath between his teeth in a thin whistling sound, and I saw that his eyes were black with anger. It would go hard for Antrobus if ever this brown-faced giant had him in his grip.

"You are for Dene Chase, Sussex, Jackson." His face fell.

"Oh no! You are not out of the running by any means. First make a call on my solicitors and give them any information they may require to know, except the fact that I am still alive. I can foresee an unholy muddle when I reappear, but a little hard work will do them good. Tell them that you are taking a run over to Ireland to see your relative there." I smiled at Jackson's thunderstruck face. I rather fancied that the relative was a fair cousin, and that Jackson was more than a little "bitten." "And when you are over there," I continued, "take a little

jaunt down Rosslare way. I shall be particularly interested to know if there are any gentlemen in that neighbourhood interested in yachting and motor-boat racing. If there are, wire to Mr. David Jonathan here that the *cattle will arrive at Abergwaun Harbour on a certain day.* And see to it that some cattle are sent. I leave the buying to you, and if they are not in good fettle Mr. Jonathan will have a word with you when you return. You must arrange it very carefully so as not to leave a single clue behind. You are sure to have some farmer friend who can do the buying and send the wire. When you have done that, return to Harford via London. I forgot to mention that you must travel over from Holyhead to Dublin, and come back the same way."

These may sound elaborate precautions but I had under-rated Antrobus once and I was certainly not going to do so again.

"And quickness is essential. Get away by the mail to-morrow morning." As I finished, I looked at Jerry, who sat with his head cocked to one side. "Hist!' He held up a warning finger. "Car coming. Slacking down outside your drive."

"Quick!" The tall red whiskered Jonathan had flashed into action. Pushing the table aside he lifted a trap door. "Down you go! Five steps. You'll be in a cellar that leads down to the cave. You, David, fetch in the mastiff. Damn it man! Don't stand there like a fool. Jump to it!"

Jerry and Jackson and I tumbled down the steps and the heavy trap door shut down with a dull thud over our heads. I heard the table being pushed back and Jonathan's feet moving swiftly over the flags as he hurried to and fro clearing away all evidences of out visit. We were in pitch darkness.

"Make yourselves comfortable," I advised, "and remain as still as death. Best to remain where we are. We will be able to hear who it is and what goes on."

So we sat down on the steps one above the other. Now that we were accustomed to the darkness I could see a faint glimmer of light along the crack at the edge of the trap door. I heard a soft snuffling above and knew that the mastiff was on hand. I had seen him a few days previously, a massive and ugly fellow with a leering sneer across his scarred face. Jerry's pet name for him was "Dovey," but I should have thought "Blue Murder" more appropriate.

The two Jonathans had drawn chairs up to the table, and I could guess their occupations. The small dark one would be rolling cigarettes, while the rugged, red-haired one drank neat Irish by the half pint.

The mastiff growled like thunder.

Jerry was right. The car had stopped at the drive and someone was coming along it.

Presently a knock came to the door, and the house reverberated to the mad clamour of the hound. From

outside there came an answering bark, and I felt Jerry's hand tighten on my knee. It was the Alsatian from Fox Pit House. The small Jonathan crossed to the door and opened it an inch. "Who's there?" he asked.

Even though I was expecting it, I felt a thrill at the reply.

"I am Mr. Antrobus, from Fox Pit House. May I come in?"

The elder Jonathan spoke querulously.

"Ask him what he wants, David. And tell him to send his dog back unless he wants it killed."

I could not catch what followed, but I heard Antrobus speak to his dog, and after a little more confused talk I heard the red-whiskered Jonathan tell his brother to let him in, so he could hear what it was all about. The old boy was in a flaming temper, and was as suspicious as the proprietor of a night club. I wondered how he would stand up to the scrutiny of those eyes behind the tinted glasses. I caught the sound of Antrobus's mincing step, and now heard his pleasant drawling voice more clearly.

"'Er. May I sit down? I—er—have a little business to do with you."

The mastiff emitted a never-ceasing mutter, like the rumble of distant thunder. He, at any rate, had taken a violent dislike to the tall, sinister man with the tinted glasses.

"There's a chair," remarked the elder Jonathan

coldly. "You had better sit still, the dog doesn't seem to like you."

"Ah! So I perceive," said Antrobus. "And I must say that I certainly don't like your dog. I have heard about it, but was informed that it was always kept on a chain."

"Not at this time of the night, mister," replied old Jonathan frostily. "It's time all respectable people were indoors."

This was certainly one up to Jonathan, and I grinned appreciatively.

Antrobus laughed softly. "Yet I have seen you out, Mr. Jonathan, much later than this, but I presume that you are perfectly respectable."

The Celtic temper flamed up in the other. "You had best not presume anything, Mr. Antrobus. Be civil, state your business or I'll set the dog on you. People that crawl around this time of the night are usually up to no good."

Jonathan was taking a really good line, and his hostility would have deterred a lesser man. But Antrobus was a past master in the art of bluff himself, and he took absolutely no notice. When he spoke his voice was softly insinuating.

"I see you are a direct man, Mr. Jonathan. Very well, I will be direct with you."

"And quick," interjected the other Jonathan, who up to now had been silent. "I'm just off to bed. This is no hour for business."

"That's where I beg to differ," drawled Antrobus. "For certain business—yes. Such as—smuggling, for instance."

I heard the elder Jonathan draw in his breath sharply.

Next moment he had jumped to his feet in a towering rage. Smashing his fist down on the table he literally roared at Antrobus. "Out! Out! D'ye hear!"

Antrobus spoke coolly: but every word came out like a stone from a sling.

"Don't bluff, Jonathan. I know you and your brother are smugglers."

I could not help but admire the man's bravery, sitting there alone confronting the wrath-inflamed Jonathans and their terrible dog, big as a lion, a man-killer.

I heard the elder Jonathan sit down heavily and the younger hitch his chair to the table.

"Ah! That's better," sighed Antrobus. "Now we can talk business."

His deadly assurance had pierced the Jonathans' bluff. He had a hold over them. I wondered what his terms would be. I wondered, too, just how far the Jonathans' loyalty would go. As I have said, I had first distrusted them, but later had formed the opinion that they would stand by us. Anyway, it was to be tested now. We should know in a few minutes. Of one thing I was certain, Antrobus had not the slightest idea that Jerry Scant and that other tramp

had taken refuge under this roof. I tingled with expectation.

"How much will you take not to fish in Deadman's Bay?"

The question had come with such suddenness that I almost gasped. The Jonathans showed they were frankly puzzled by this remark.

"You see," continued Antrobus, "I don't desire to be hard on you. I always believe in a generous compromise. I will put it to you like this. I am engaged in making a very important film. Secrecy is the one thing which will bring success. That is why we have come to this remote spot. No unauthorised person is allowed on my premises day or night. Certain of the operations are carried out in the disused quarries in Deadman's Bay, and it is disturbing to find you sailing around this bay at night-time. Why did you do it?" The last question was expelled as if from an air gun, and I hung on the reply.

"The lobster," replied Jonathan. Antrobus was baffled.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Jonathan chuckled throatily. "Just that it is the best bay for lobster around the coast."

Antrobus was silent for a while.

"Then why are you two the only fishermen who visit it?" he asked.

"Because it is looked on as our right," replied Jonathan. "There are queer customs on the sea."

"So!" replied Antrobus. "And so! But might I suggest it is because you are smugglers." He coughed deprecatingly. "I am sorry to have to keep reminding you of that. But let us forget it. Now what do you say to one hundred pounds to keep away from it for a week from to-night?"

"Done!" cried the younger Jonathan. The elder turned on him pettishly.

"Hush your noise, man! A hundred pounds. What's that to a film director?"

"Two," said Antrobus.

"No," replied Jonathan.

"Very well," said Antrobus with an air of absolute finality. "The police will be around to-morrow morning."

"I don't mind they stupid fools," replied Jonathan.

Antrobus laughed contemptuously. "Oh yes you will," he sneered, "I shall mention a few simple dates to them, January the 10th, February the 22nd, April the 9th, and a few more."

"Good God!" gasped both the Jonathans at once. They were through and they knew it.

"Two hundred accepted?" asked Antrobus lightly.

"Yes. Yes. Oh yes! Two hundred will do us, Mr. Antrobus."

"Very well. I will pay you now."

The money was paid over and Antrobus rose to go. The elder Jonathan could not resist a further thrust.

"Mr. Antrobus," he said, "you don't think that you have taken me in with your cock and bull story of the secret film?"

Then Antrobus came out in his true colours. He turned on the Jonathans like a snarling beast.

"You can believe what the hell you like. I've got you both. Play me false and your ruin is as certain as death! Good-night!"

CHAPTER XII

THE "DOUBLE-CROSS" EXPLAINED

For at least a minute after he had left there was complete silence. I could imagine that the Jonathans sat staring at one another in mute surprise. They had had two hundred pounds thrown at them, but they did not know quite where they stood. The ground seemed to be cut away from under their feet. The elder one recovered first.

"Take the hound with you, David, and see that devil off the premises."

David went out and his brother pushed the table aside and raising the trap door peered down at us.

"Stay you there a minute or so," he said. "David's gone to see him off."

So we waited until he returned with the news that Antrobus had been driven off in his Daimler saloon.

Immediately my eyes were accustomed to the light, I could see that the Jonathans' attitude had changed towards us. I do not say that they actually bore us any ill will, but they certainly regarded us as birds of ill omen.

The first thing was to get Jackson away. Jerry and I would deal with the Jonathans later. If Antrobus could bluff them with the police how much more

so could I who had only to say one word over a telephone to have the house surrounded in less than three hours.

So I gave Jackson parting instructions, warned him to be extra cautious, wished him good-luck, and turned to the other occupants of the room.

I sat down in the chair which Antrobus had lately vacated. The two Jonathans regarded me uneasily. A large grandfather clock in the corner ticked and tocked unconcernedly. The huge mastiff lay full length under the table, his head resting against his master's foot.

"Bit awkward, Jonathan, isn't it?" I asked genially.

The only reply I received was a grunt. The flashing dark eyes of the younger flicked from Jerry to me, and then to his brother. The elder moved his eyes slily under his shaggy red eyebrows.

"Personally," I recommenced, "I do not see why you should not earn two hundred perfectly good pounds. I am all for it in fact."

The elder Jonathan spoke.

"It would not make a bit of difference how you felt, Mister. We are not going into Deadman's Bay again this side of next Wednesday and that's final."

"Oh!" said Jerry softly. "That's the game, is it?"

"Quiet, Jerry," I cautioned. "This is my show."

I suppose a new note of authority had slipped into my voice. I removed my eye shade and looked the elder Jonathan straight in the eye. The time had come, I thought, for plain speaking.

"Mr. Jonathan," I began, "I am truly grateful for the services you have rendered us up to now, more particularly since you have not been told who I am. Even now I cannot disclose my name but I can tell you that I am a prominent officer in Great Britain's Secret Service. I am here to trap a smuggler of cocaine, opium and other dangerous drugs. Antrobus is that man. He has threatened you with exposure to the police. That threat is null and void, since I know all about you and could have you both arrested by saying just two words. I do not threaten you for you have been my friends. Neither shall I ask you to go into Deadman's Bay again."

The small dark brother licked his dry lips. "Then we are lost whichever way we turn?"

"No," said I, "not whichever way you turn."

The elder brother turned on him fiercely. "Fool," he spat out. "Cannot you see you must turn to this gentleman." He turned to me as if to make a proposition, but I cut him short.

"Force no conditions," I warned him. "You have already indicated your only course."

The old fellow's opposition broke down finally.

"Very good, sir," he remarked. "I'll double-cross Antrobus, but I swear I'll be true to you."

Somehow or other I believed the shifty old scamp, though goodness knows why. He had just received two hundred pounds from Antrobus and yet he proposed to double-cross him as coolly as if he were having breakfast. But I thought that I had a greater hold over him. Antrobus was trying to enforce obedience

by bribery and fear. But I had the whole force and majesty of the Law behind me.

Jerry and I retired to the cave. He thought I had been too easy with the Jonathans, but after I explained the position to him he could see I had gone far enough.

"I shall not require them for Deadman's Bay again, Jerry," I concluded. "That part of the business is now up to us. But I shall require their services in other ways. Plenty of time for them later."

It was now midnight, and I was afraid to stir out of the place to-night. We knew that Antrobus and his crowd had the house under observation. We should therefore have to make careful plans before attempting a survey of Deadman's Bay. This was very annoying.

I was tormented, too, by the realisation that Antrobus's work in this quarter was drawing to a close. Either that, or he was expecting to land a cargo in the next few days. Else why had he given the Jonathans two hundred pounds to keep away for a week?

Here, in the quiet of the cave, with the cool night air blowing on my face and the soft murmur of the waves far below, I could think and plan. Back there in the Jonathans' kitchen so many disturbing influences had been at work.

Gradually a plan took shape in my mind, and I talked it over with Jerry. We went over the details step by step, examined the weak spots, tied up all the loose ends, and before two o'clock had arranged

all to our satisfaction. Given at least a modicum of luck, in less than a week we expected to have Antrobus under arrest and his gang smashed up.

All next day we lay low. Early in the evening I went up to the Jonathans and told them that they could go fishing on their own account that night, but not in Deadman's Bay. I arranged for them to leave the house at about nine o'clock. If they caught sight of anyone stalking them they were not to take any notice or give any sign. They were merely to man their boat, push off and return when they liked.

I noticed that the cold reserve of the elder Jonathan had thawed considerably. It was as though he was trying to make amends for his temporary alliance with Antrobus. Antrobus had dealt some high cards when playing with the Jonathans. I admired the fellow's pluck, whilst being astounded at his knowledge.

The Jonathans left promptly at nine o'clock. Jerry and I watched them go from the barn. We had come up from the cave by the barn passage for a particular reason. Keeping a careful watch, we saw a dark figure detach itself from under a hedgerow and creep after the Jonathans.

"Number one," whispered Jerry softly.

We remained perfectly still, and in rather under half an hour saw the shadower return. He gave a low whistle and was immediately joined by two other men. All wore masks. The mastiff, hearing the unfamiliar steps, raged like a lion in the stables. One

of the men spat on the door as he passed by. They were just the sort of filthy foreigners that Antrobus liked to have about him. They moved with the sinuosity of professional crooks, and Latins at that. In less than three minutes they were all inside the house. They were so sure of themselves that they did not trouble to post a guard.

"Come on, pard," whispered Jerry. "The dirty blackguards are welcome to what they find there." So while Antrobus's crooks ransacked the Jonathan's house, Jerry and I slid away across the fields towards Fox Pit House and Deadman's Bay. Once when we halted in a coppice, Jerry spoke.

"What's puzzling me, pard, is how ye knew that old Blue Specs. would send his crooks along."

"I did not know," I replied, "but I thought there would be a good chance of its happening. It is a question of putting yourself in the other man's shoes. Antrobus has the Jonathans in his pay, or thinks he has: but at the same time he's not trusting them an inch."

An owl glided silently above us.

"Did ye warn the Jonathans pard?"

"No," I replied. "I wanted them to leave everything in its natural order."

"By damn! That's lucky, pard. Old Jonathan the Red would not be above setting a spring gun. He will do after to-night if he finds out that anybody's been prowling around, mark my words."

"The only thing I am worried about, Jerry, is that they may find the entrance to the cave."

Jerry gave a snort. "Not they, pard. Not they little rats! They will lift the trap door and go down the cellar, but old Jonathan's potatoes and coal won't make 'em rich."

Jerry was in his glory. He loved the woods and fields with a deep, abiding love. That, I firmly believe, was the secret of his uncanny success in blending with the background.

To-night, however, the first part of our journey was an easy one. Keeping away from the cliffs, Jerry led the way through the little gorse-covered valleys. Almost before I realised it we were on the confines of Fox Pit House. There, a hundred yards ahead, loomed the line of storm-driven trees on the edge of the wood. They banked up darkly like a thunder-cloud, and once again I was struck with the perfect seclusion of the place. It was even to the surrounding country side a house of mystery. Even before Antrobus had rented it no one seemed to know much about it. I had found out, in the course of my inquiries, that the previous tenant was a queer old recluse. He was eventually found dead on the cliff top by a fisherman out after sea-birds' eggs. It was a secret and evil house.

"Boldness is the best policy in these games, partner," whispered Jerry. "We will go in from the road end and work right through the heart of the grounds. You see, pard, the watch will be strictest around the edges. Once inside we are in clover, as 'twere."

Silently we slid through the undergrowth, and vaulting a low, fern-covered wall, we were plunged

in the deep shadow of the trees. At first my heart beat faster as I found myself on this unholy ground again. But Jerry moved with such sureness, and seemed so utterly unconcerned that I soon felt quite easy.

Right past the house we went, leaving its gleaming lights behind us in the trees. Now came the ticklish moments. The wood narrowed down to a wedge not forty yards wide, to enter the steep-sided coombe which led down to the quarry.

We had just entered the neck when I caught the sound of quick, light footsteps. I needed not Jerry's whispered injunction "Down." In a twink both of us were flat on our faces. But our luck was out. The steps came closer and a moment later stopped right over us. As if actuated by a spring which controlled us both, Jerry and I rose up to seize the intruder, but next instant, I fell back with a gasp.

It was Celia Ferlie. I noticed that her face wore a strained, hunted look, and when she spoke her voice was low and compelling.

"Who are you? Tell me, quickly."

It came upon me in one of those illuminating flashes that she had news to tell, and that, furthermore, she was in deadly danger. In an instant my mind was made up.

"Celia," I said, "keep all your pluck and nerve. I'm Bill Warren."

She gave a low moan, and I thought she was going to collapse. Then, with a mighty effort, she pulled herself together.

"Thank God!" she said. "Oh! Thank God!"

All things considered, she had taken that shock pretty well.

In a flash her demeanour changed. "Quickly, Bill," she said, "listen to me. I don't know what is going on in this house, but I am a prisoner."

"What?"

"Quietly," she whispered. "Yes! I have tried to break out twice, but have been brought back each time. Oh, not by force. They are too clever for that. I dare not let on that I suspect anything or I am sure they would lock me up or do something dreadful. I happened to overhear Antrobus say that someone was coming from Ireland on Tuesday night, and since then they have not let me out of their sight."

"On Tuesday night," I interrupted. "Are you certain of that?"

"Yes, yes! At midnight. But I haven't the foggiest what it's all about. But I know it's something pretty vital or they wouldn't have treated me like this. It is my firm opinion the whole company is a sham. Oh, I've been a fool not to have seen it before, but I was so dead keen on acting, Bill——"

"I know. Don't worry about that," I broke in. "Tell me all you know. Are you in danger?"

"Not yet, I think. But I shall be when they miss me."

"Where are you going now?"

"Back to the house. I slipped out. To-night I tried to get away along the coast, but the place is guarded. I'm trapped."

"She'll never get away, pard," whispered Jerry. "I saw four as we came in. Best for her to go back.

I thought swiftly. I could see the truth of Jerry's remarks, yet I felt I could not send her back to that house of mystery and peril.

Celia must have read my thoughts.

"He is right, Bill. I must go back. I shall be quite safe. Don't worry! Now that I know you are alive and well and on this job, I shall be quite happy."

"Silly little fathead," said my practical self, but my heart gave a mighty jump.

"But are you certain you will be all right?" I asked anxiously.

"My dear old Bill," replied Celia, "you haven't seen me act."

Just then a commotion came from the house. Doors opened and I heard the sound of men's voices.

Celia held out a hand.

"Cheerio, Bill," she whispered. "Now for it."

With that she hurried away towards the house. I put out a hand to detain her, but it was seized in Jerry's muscular ones.

"Down, pard," he hissed. When we were flat on the ground he whispered in my ear:

"Blast my pony's old fetlocks, that little lady has more sense in her little finger than you've got in your whole hulking body."

I heard a shout as someone sighted Celia, and lay there in writhing torment. Had it not been for Jerry, I believe I should have been fool enough to have charged berserk at the whole mob. As soon as Celia

was in their midst they all returned to the house. I turned to Jerry, and saw that his face was grey and strained.

"Pard," he whispered, "that little pal of yours sure has pluck. Next time I meet her she can wipe her little shoes all over my back. It's the first time ever Jerry Scant has allowed a woman to face danger alone."

CHAPTER XIII

AN UNHAPPY ONE, AND THEREFORE SHORT

We remained quiet for ten minutes or so, each busy with his own thoughts, no enviable ones I can assure you.

"Jerry," I whispered presently, "somehow or other we have got to see the quarry in Deadman's Bay to-night. I've got to know the lie of the land before I can go ahead with my plan. Have we time, old comrade?"

"Easy," whispered Jerry, "but sharp's the motion."

So, wriggling and doubling and crawling, we made our way down through the coombe, until I saw an iron cleft in the sky-line and heard the soft lap of the waves. Down we went until we were actually on the very lip of the quarry. Beneath us on our left ran the path to the water.

It was a grimly sinister place. Actually it was a sort of gigantic pool. The pool was fed by the sea through a narrow, rock-bound opening. Great seams of slate reared themselves into queerly contorted pillars and towers. Long ago when the quarry was worked, boats could sail right into the pool and load their cargo on the spot. Little slate cutters' shelters were still dotted about on the flat rocks at the bottom

and on ledges from where the slate had been quarried. These were built of slate slabs, and roofed with great shields of slate, and they glimmered in the moonlight like the caverns of some prehistoric slimy animal. The water had a deep green look about it. Where the moonlight struck its still surface, it winked up at us like an evil eye.

Great pinnacles of slate stood on the horns of the quarry like sentinels. These recalled me to our danger, and I looked searchingly around. At the same instant, I felt the pressure of Jerry's hand on my leg. We lay in a fold of the ground under the lee of a mere tuft of gorse which clung for its life on the bank. From behind one of the pinnacles there stepped a man. Silhouetted against the sky he appeared tremendous. Scarce daring to breathe we lay and watched him. Until he went back behind the pillar of slate we were unable to move. He appeared to be looking straight at us. I thought he must have seen us, and expected every second to hear his warning whistle. But after what seemed an hour, but in reality was only about two minutes, he turned and looked out to sea. Putting a hand in his pocket he drew out his cigarettes. Across the intervening space I heard the rattle of matches as he slapped his pocket for them. Going close under the pinnacle of slate he bent his head and struck a match. At that very instant, Jerry and I slid back from the quarry edge and were once again under the friendly shelter of respectably-sized gorse.

It was a close shave, but for the past two weeks I had been thriving on these, and our luck had held good.

The luck was almost too good in fact, and I had an uncomfortable presentiment that something mighty unpleasant was going to happen.

Those who have lived through dangerous times will appreciate this feeling. Soldiers in the trenches who had seen a year's continuous active service would one day wake up with an uncanny feeling that danger threatened them. On that very day they would become casualties. Some who had spoken of this to me had been killed, others badly wounded.

So that although we got out of the grounds of Fox Pit House without being discovered I somehow felt depressed. As a matter of fact, our journey had been most fruitful. For, if Celia's information was correct, we had the date on which a further cargo was expected.

Back in the cave Jerry and I talked over this, and finally laid our plans.

I was for staking all on Celia's information. If reliable, we no longer had need for further night prowls. None realised more than Jerry himself the appalling risks we ran each time we set foot outside the cave. The risk of capture from the police was not now of such importance. I had gathered all the information I could, and in a final report passed this along to Sir Arnold. It now remained for Sir Arnold Withers and his men to carry out their part. Explanations to the police force would follow, and Jerry and I would be free. But what did matter was the ever present danger of our being captured again by the cocaine gang. I knew full well that if we were caught in the grounds a second time Antrobus

would smell a rat, and our lives would not be worth a second's purchase. So, taking all things into consideration, Jerry and I decided to sit still and await events.

If anyone thinks this was an easy job, he is very much mistaken. The mental torment was such that had it not been for the philosophical Jerry Scant I think I should have gone mad.

In my blundering, bull-like way, I had suddenly discovered that I, the confirmed bachelor, was in love. I had seen so much of woman's deception during my early days with the Secret Service, that I had fought shy of anything wearing a skirt. My friends all teased me about it, and I know I must have been the despair of certain anxious mothers at coming-out balls. I used to shy at the most harmless of invitations to shooting parties, and took refuge at my father's old home in Sussex. I had fortunately come into a fair sum of money, which enabled me to buy most of the estate back, and I was in the middle of restoring it when I had Sir Arnold's summons.

Looking back, it seems to me that I had had Celia in my heart for several years. I only know that no other had ever been there. But now that this great knowledge had come to me what right had I to ask the love of the far-famed and beautiful Lady Celia.

And to think that I who now loved her so much that I would have tackled the whole of Antrobus's gang single-handed to get her away, had to allow her to stay in that dread house for the sake of the "job."

These are sheer hard, solid facts, and I had to lie day after day in the cave and ponder them. Hour after hour I faced them squarely, and wondered if I I was doing right. Minute after minute I wondered whether Celia Ferlie was still alive.

Sometimes I would start up and go to the boulder which hid the passage, only to hear Jerry's steady voice, "Easy, pard. Take it easy now."

"But, Jerry," I would expostulate. "How the hell do you expect me to remain here like a cowardly rat in a hole when——"

"'Od rot my pony's old teeth! Listen now to reason. Listen to old Jerry Scant, pard. That little lady has gotten brains. Mind you, I'm not telling ye that she's not in danger. But I'm dead certain she will weather it. She's a tight little craft, and she'll get under Antrobus's guns, like the English ships did the Spanish galleons. Now, keep a good heart, pard, keep a good heart now."

And so it went on for three days. Monday morning came, and with it a most welcome piece of news. It was a telegram from Jackson to the Jonathans. Eagerly I took the buff form out of the red Jonathan's hand and withdrew the friendly sheet.

This is what I read:

"CATTLE ARRIVING ABERGWAUN NEXT BOAT, FOUR ONLY PURCHASED."

The name of an Irish cattle dealer appeared under this.

My deductions had been correct, Antrobus had a gang on the Irish coast.

Grimly I passed it on to Jerry. A few days before I should have received this with a whoop of joy, but my enforced spell of waiting, and the dread uncertainty I had suffered about Celia, had unnerved me

CHAPTER XIV

WHICH TELLS HOW WE AGAIN HEAR THE BARKING LAUGH

BUT I concentrated on the job.

The time was now ripe for Sir Arnold Withers to place his men. I knew I could rely upon that crafty old strategist to carry out his plans secretly. As I did not know myself what these plans were it was a hundred to one against anyone else knowing. Yet such was my implicit faith in the man that I knew that when the time came his men would be on hand. He had informed me that he had two aeroplanes in readiness. Somehow or other, he would, when the moment came to strike, have a squad of his best men on hand, recalled from all parts at a second's notice. This was extremely comforting. For weeks I had been working out a lone game, absolutely cut off from the powerful influence of the Service. It was good now to feel that all its resources were at our backs. It gave us confidence.

Antrobus was still suspicious of the Jonathans. Each night his hooligans had visited the farm. Had the stakes been less heavy, Jerry and I would have found considerable amusement in this. It was so like a game of blindman's buff, with both parties

blindfolded. The hooligans employed by Antrobus came at the same time each night. When the Jonathans were out they searched the house. When they were in they searched the outbuildings. We watched them every night from the farm, and retreated to the cave during the search. They were the usual housebreaker type: exceedingly clever at breaking into buildings and concealing themselves behind corners, but not a bit of use in the country. Jerry always saw or heard them approaching long before they reached the farm.

The Jonathans knew nothing of these visits, and we did not enlighten them, as we wished everything to appear natural. We took great care, however, that the entrances to the cave were closed each time we used them, and also that no utensils were left about belonging to us. I am quite certain that they found out nothing.

Monday night came and I could stand it no longer.

"Jerry," I said quietly, "I cannot sit here to-night. Let us make one more survey of Fox Pit House. There may be a chance."

Without a word, Jerry got up and put on his coat. When he turned to me I saw his eyes were smiling.

"Righto, pard," he said. "Attack is often the best defence, as my old mine-sweeper skipper said as he fired off his pea-shooter gun at a submarine."

Curiously enough, it was Jerry who very nearly wrecked our schemes that night. But it gave an

indication that all along Jerry had been feeling the inaction as badly as I had.

We were lying full length in a clump of rhododendrons when we heard Celia's voice. A moment later she came along the walk accompanied by Antrobus. The latter, sure in his power, and safe in his fancied concealment, was talking recklessly.

"To-morrow night, my dear young lady, will see a change in our fortunes. As you remarked a few moments ago, we are hiding something from you. But I would point out to you that it would be a strange company that passed its secrets along to its employees."

Celia's voice came scornfully.

"It isn't that so much, Mr. Antrobus, and you know it. I have a feeling that I am being watched all the time. I never feel alone. What is it? Is there anything wrong?"

Antrobus laughed his dreadful barking laugh, and I saw Celia start back in amazement. She had evidently never seen Antrobus in his true colours. As the last note of that dreadful laugh still hung on the air, I sensed a movement behind me. To my astonishment Jerry was up on one knee. Hastily I shot out a restraining hand and checked him just in time. Another instant and he would have hurled himself upon Antrobus like a wild cat. His face was distorted with rage, and one hand was buried deep in his right hand pocket. Antrobus was never so near death and our scheme never so near failure.

Then came Celia's flippant laugh, and I knew the situation was saved.

"Why, Mr. Antrobus," she scoffed, "you are quite the stage villain. I wonder you have never gone on the boards."

Antrobus, who must have realised that he had shown his hand unwisely, replied with some commonplace, and the twain passed on.

I felt Jerry trembling like a leaf, and as soon as I could suggested quitting the grounds. Once out of earshot, Jerry turned and faced me.

"Pard," he said, "that little lady has the pluck of a terrier. Fancy facing Antrobus and his devilish laugh as if 'twere naught. I tell you straight, every time I hear that barking laugh of his I get the wobbles all down my spine." Jerry raised his face to the stars. "I swear," he said, "I swear by all those swinging worlds that if he hurts a hair of the little lady's head I'll send him down to hell screaming."

About four o'clock on Tuesday morning, Jackson returned. He had done well, and looked vastly pleased with himself. If there was one thing more than another to put Jackson in the highest humour, it was the carrying out of a little job all on his own bat, so to speak. The little jaunt to Ireland had appealed to him, and the fact that he had been able to supply me with the necessary information had made him as proud as a cat with two tails.

I was very glad he had returned in time for the show. An extra hand at the pump might make all the difference

Sir Arnold Withers had been able to get a few messages through to him.

Archie Wemyss had been shot at, and wounded in the forearm, by an unknown assailant in Scotland. A number of special men had been rushed up there to investigate. This, I realised, was another of Sir Arnold's red herrings. I was alarmed for Archie's safety, however, and hoped they would regard it seriously enough to see that he was retired out of harm's way. His had been a thankless part, stuck up in Scotland as a mere decoy. But that is what one may expect of the Service, and it is all in the game. Another, more comforting, message was that at midnight Fox Pit House would be surrounded by Sir Arnold's men, and that as soon as the smugglers had landed the first cargo a raid would be made. A hydroplane would look after the motor boat.

I smiled, for I could see a lively time in front of Antrobus and his men. But we had a stiff task in front of us, for although we could now safely leave the capture of the gang to Sir Arnold's men, we had before us the freeing of Celia and the capture of Antrobus.

First we held a council of war, to which at a later stage in the proceedings, we invited the Jonathans. For the first time since we had met them we laid all our cards on the table. I shall never forget the look on the elder Jonathan's face, as we told him what was happening. Incredulity, amazement, horror (at his own narrow escape, no doubt), anger, and white-

hot blazing temper succeeded one another in turn. To give him his due, hardened old rascal that he was, he was horrified at the nature of the cargo Antrobus was smuggling. He sprang up off his box and strode across the cave, peered out to sea and muttered strange oaths. It was curious to observe how, when anyone was informed of Antrobus's real calling, they turned on him as if he were a poisonous snake. There are, I suppose, some crimes which place men irrevocably beyond the range of human sympathies. The handling of dope is one.

If Antrobus had been engaged merely on smuggling Namaqualand diamonds, or silks, or even if he were a gun-runner, one could have forgiven him. But drugs! Ugh!

I saw the elder Jonathan's lip lift in loathing. His little eyes twinkled with hate, and I knew that Antrobus had made yet another deadly enemy. The younger Jonathan was not so visibly moved. I had a suspicion that he feared Antrobus more than he could hate him. As I had previously remarked, the elder Jonathan was always the more reliable in a tight corner.

We had reckoned on the place being more strictly guarded than usual on this night, and that it would not be possible for all five of us to get into the grounds unseen. We therefore proposed to use the Jonathans as a blind. They would take their nets and land on the coast as near to Deadman's Bay as possible. They were sure to be seen, and were to draw the enemy's fire as it were. We reckoned that the cocaine

gang could not resort to murder where the Jonathans were concerned. It was too risky. There was likely to be an unholy row, and there might be a fight. This was all to the good. The Jonathans would undoubtedly be worsted if it came to blows, but I expected that the gang would confine themselves to hustling only. Anything to keep the Jonathans out of the bay when the stuff came in.

Relying on Sir Arnold's men being in position by midnight, Jerry and I decided that it would not be advisable to enter the grounds before eleven. This would allow us an hour to take up a position as near the house as possible and to keep an eye upon Celia. If we saw the slightest opportunity we would attempt a rescue and take our chances of getting out. It was a terribly risky procedure, but I could see no other way for it. If Celia's information was correct, and we had no reason to doubt it, the stuff was due to be landed at midnight. Therefore we reasoned that the main part of the gang would be down at the quarry in Deadman's Bay. Their whole attention would be directed to those operations. There might be a rattling good chance of getting Celia out of their clutches. If the escape were noticed and we were seen, we should have to run for it, and trust to Jerry's uncanny skill to keep us hidden until midnight. At that time the gang would have other things to occupy its attention. Looking at the venture in this light, it certainly seemed as if we had reasonable hopes of success. For once the dice were loaded against Antrobus. But when I thought of

that terrible man, my plans seemed futile and amateurish. However, they were the best we could devise, in the circumstances.

The Jonathans returned to the farmhouse, and Jerry and I slept.

CHAPTER XV

TELLS OF DISASTER AND DEATH

THAT night, after the sun had lowered itself into the sea and the violet curtain of dusk had drawn itself over the mouth of the cave, Jerry and I sat staring seawards. Far out, beyond the sentinel island of Rockholm, lay the track of the great ships. Continually they passed up and down this track as if drawn by invisible ropes. The centre track was used by the great liners connecting the Old World with the New. These giant floating castles passed majestically up and down the line, not deigning to notice the smaller craft which hung like jackals on the outskirts of a caravan. At night time, when the castles were lighted at every port-hole, they swung over the face of the deep like gigantic lanterns. Swung and left behind them a surging, tossing and creamy swell which presently died down and left no mark. The great ship had passed, but had left no impress on the mighty sea.

Wide of this great ocean track nosed the small humble craft. The carriers, the tramps, the black-nosed coal boats, and stinking oil tankers, the fruit boats, and the ugly general cargo boats of doubtful origin.

The violet night deepened and a stillness settled down as lightly as a bird.

"Pard," said Jerry, "the sea is a mighty mysterious sort of monster."

He struck a match, held it behind a huge cupped hand, and applied it to his pipe. Sending out two great clouds of smoke, he turned to Jackson.

"You don't know how I feel about the sea, Jackson, being an indoor man. Many a night have I laid close to its whispering mouth, and it has told me more things than you could believe."

He pulled reflectively at his pipe.

"Far more than you could believe. I'll tell you about 'em some day. There's things happening to-night for instance that some people couldn't believe."

He stubbed the stem of his pipe into the void.

"Out there," he continued, "out there beyond the track of the ships is Ireland. To-night, if our deductions are correct, a motor boat has set out, perhaps two of 'em, and they'll cross that shipping line to meet one of them little sneaky cargo boats that's manned by a lot of dagoes, and captained by a cross between a Greek and an Argentine. I know the sort. I've worked in 'em, pard. There's no nationality on the sea, let me tell you. It's elemental, and men are just men, nothing more or less. A dago is a hell of a man to deal with, but he is a good sailor. There will be queer things happening beyond Rockholm to-night, pard, and those dagoes will manage it."

He fell silent and I thought on his words. Old Jerry had expressed in his rough way exactly what I was feeling. The sea has always had a peculiar effect upon my mind, and I could see that it affected Jerry in the same way. Confronting its vast restless expanse my imagination runs riot. I could visualise with perfect clarity the picture Jerry had so crudely yet faithfully drawn. My mind like his was searching far out beyond the Rockholm, and I wondered what was happening. I wished I could have taken wing like a seagull and circled overhead as the risky business of transfer was carried out.

Far below us the surf broke against the base of the cliff. The sound of it came up to us in the cave with a peculiar significance. It seemed to warn us of hidden sinister things. The very coast in this neighbourhood was so grand as to be awe-inspiring, especially at night time, when the great masses of rock loomed up blackly, and the rocky islets off the shore stood like black sentinels against the deep. Grim and mysterious the jagged rocks off St. David's showed their dark fingers. Over all there brooded a mysterious spirit of the waters. We sat waiting for something to come up out of the sea, something from beyond the last sentinel island.

Silent now we sat, each busy with his own thoughts. Although neither of us had mentioned it, we knew in our own minds that our mission to-night was fraught with more danger than we yet had set out upon. It seemed impossible that we could score all along the line and come out unscathed. Perhaps

one of us would not see the dawn. The sea was doing its best to warn us. Jerry's face, I noticed, was dark, and I could tell, from the way he gripped his pipe, that he had received the warning. Jackson's stolid countenance was untroubled, but, knowing him of old, I looked down at his feet, and noticed that his left moved rhythmically, as if beating time. It was the old feeling of zero hour. The dread bottomless feeling which knocked at the hearts of men waiting in shattered trenches to get up and face the leaden hail which could tear its way through skin and bone and sinew, the maiming crippling hail of death. There was a death lurking at Fox Pit House just as sudden, as sure and as terrible. I imagined Antrobus lurking there like some gigantic spider. Knowing his familiarity with strange Eastern drugs, I feared for the safety of Celia. In fact, I could not bear to let my mind dwell upon this, for a red, berserk rage would surge up and blind my eyes, destroying all reason.

So we three sat and smoked in silence, each with his own thoughts. Jerry moody and darkly brooding, Jackson stolid and unwinking, but with soft beating foot, myself with fingers tight pressed around the bowl of my pipe. Presently I arose and knocked it out on the rock wall.

"Well boys, time's up!"

Jerry expectorated violently, put his pipe in his pocket and withdrew his automatic. Sliding up the safety catch, he examined the breech, and saw that it was loaded to full capacity. Jerry had no illusions about the night's work.

"Strewth, pard!" he muttered, "the feel of this makes me feel wicked. I don't want to use these, but if Antrobus and his goldarned crowd ask for it, well all I can say is they'll get it."

For the last five days Jerry had been oiling and polishing all three automatics.

"Ugly critturs," was his name for them, and he frankly confessed that he hated the sight of them. "But," he would say, "it's a poor soldier who cannot look after his life-preserver, and we may need them later. When we do I'll see mine don't jamb."

Thorough to the smallest detail was old Jerry. No scamped work. Everything had to be done in its right and only way. Now that the actual moment of starting had come his black mood had disappeared. He was as happy as a schoolboy setting out on an orchard raid. He firmly believed that we were going to call the tune and make Antrobus pay the piper. We went up to the Jonathans' house. The elder looked at me from under his craggy brows.

"You are feeling troubled, Colonel Warren."

I looked at him in surprise. His eyes were fixed on mine steadily.

"Oh! Not on your own account," he added. I continued to stare, for if there is anything I resent it is a fellow trying to probe one's feelings.

He indicated the glasses on the table.

"We are going to drink your health, Colonel Warren," he said. "Your presence here has never been welcomed by me, but you are a man, and a brave one." He raised his glass aloft and his eye

slipped around to the others in that furtive way. "Brother and friends," he said quietly, "I give you Colonel Warren. I have watched him since he has been with us living this hard life, and he has never complained. We wish him success in his venture to-night."

The toast was drunk in a silence which was shattered by the elder Jonathan. He had swallowed practically a whole tumbler of whisky neat. Draining it to the dregs, he dashed his glass on the floor and swore a venomous oath. "And hell fire damnation to the devil who calls himself Antrobus."

Five minutes later we were out of the house. The two Jonathans left first, and we followed via the barn. The Jonathans left ostensibly with their nets and oars. We left like shadows, keeping close under a stone wall which ran parallel to the cliff edge in the direction of Deadman's Bay.

We had decided that it would be advisable to enter from midway between Deadman's Bay and the drive gates. Both of these points would be strongly watched to-night. The centre would be the weak point.

Like ghosts we flitted across the moonbathed countryside. I was strongly reminded of a company taking up an advanced position in France. The same dramatically tense atmosphere enshrouded us. Jackson's stolid face quivered with approval. He had never seen scouting up to this standard.

We passed one watcher on the skyline, and entered the grounds without difficulty. Once inside, progress

was easy. The woods were so thick and the bushes so frequent that an army could have concealed itself without great trouble.

But as we sank down through its dark glades a sense of foreboding seized me. It was as though I had been given a dangerous and depressing drug, for I jumped at the slightest sound, and altogether my nerves were on edge. So much was at stake that this was scarcely to be wondered at, but I did not recollect my nerves playing me these tricks on previous occasions. Although the night was mild, here in the wood sudden cold breezes blew. Jackson's good humour had disappeared, and his face in the moonlight looked grim and sullen. Jerry's was watchfully alert, even he seemed affected by the stillness. Presently the house loomed up like a gigantic bucket coming slowly out of a well. We worked our way cautiously around to the front, and concealed ourselves separately in clumps of rhododendrons.

The whole house was in darkness, and was silent as a tomb. For the space of half an hour nothing moved, then, without warning, a blind lifted from a window in a turret at the top of the house, and a strong light streamed out. Then the blind was lowered again and a regular dot and dash signal followed. I could not make any sense of the message as it was in code, but I would have given much to have seen an answering signal. A dreadful thought assailed me that perhaps our plans had been discovered and that the message was a

warning one, advising cessation of operations. An owl hooted in the wood, and out on the edge a corncrake sent out his grating ventriloquial call. Far behind us I could hear the faint murmur of the sea along the coast, and once I heard the bubbling cry of the great northern diver. With startling suddenness the door opened and Antrobus came out, followed by at least ten men. Without a word he led the way across the lawn and down through a Dutch garden to the little path which led to Deadman's Bay. He passed so close to me that I could have tripped him by the ankle.

For above five minutes nothing happened then I noticed the shutters of a room on the ground floor opening slowly. One shutter swung back into its socket and I saw the figure of Celia silhouetted darkly against the light. She made as if to open the window, but next second spun around sharply. Someone had evidently entered the room. In a flash I realised that here was the very chance we were waiting for. We should never have a better one. Like an otter I slid out of the clump of rhododendrons and was across the lawn like the flick of a whip. As I went I heard a rustle behind me and guessed that Jerry and Jackson were backing up. I knew that the room where Celia had appeared was the library, and that the first door on the right inside the hall gave directly into it. It was neck or nothing. I opened the front door and sprang in; out of the corner of my eye I saw Jackson close on my heels. My hand was actually on the knob of the door when I felt it turn and the

door was wrenched open. Next moment I stood face to face with Antrobus. To say which of us was most surprised would be a difficult thing. For a brief instant we stood face to face, then I dropped my right hand into my coat pocket. As I did so I heard behind me a rush of feet. A revolver barked close to my ear, and next instant something heavy struck me at the base of my skull. A white flame seemed to surge around me, and I felt myself falling. I do not think that I completely lost consciousness, for I remember fighting savagely but ineffectually. I was soon overpowered, and bound hand and foot to a chair. When I recovered sufficiently to look around I saw Jackson alongside of me in similar plight. He looked a sorry spectacle. Blood ran down the side of his face from a deep cut over the eye. His clothes were almost torn off his back. Of Jerry there was no sign, but I saw a heavy boot protruding from behind the door, and my heart missed a beat. Celia lay back in an arm-chair, trying hard to keep a stiff upper lip. Over her stood the gigantic Nubian with a heavy rhinoceros hide crop in his massive hand.

Antrobus dabbed a blood-smeared mouth, and grinned like a cheetah.

"Quite a nice little family party."

Steps came in the hall and I overheard a muttered conversation.

" . . . Dead?"

"Looks like it. Better get him out of the way."

I heard the sinister sound of a heavy body being

dragged along the floor, and when I dared to look at the door the heavy boot had disappeared.

As through a curtain I heard Antrobus talking.

"It is very queer," he soliloquised, "to find a tramp and a townsman working hand in hand to crack a crib." He turned fiercely on me. "Who the devil are you? Eh?"

I remained silent.

"Come," he shouted, "silence won't help you this time. I suspected you last time, but I'm damned certain now. You are a rotten spy."

A look of incredulity, horror and fear suddenly sprang into his face. Raising both hands to his head he staggered backwards and I thought he had a heart attack.

"My God!" he whispered. "You are Warren!"

Then his face suffused with fury, and I thought my last moment had come. Springing on me like a wild animal, he seized my hair with one hand and battered my face with the other.

His frenzy was so terrible that his voice could only come in half strangled wailing sobs.

"Spy," he shrieked. "Spy! Infernal Spy! Kill you! Damned informer!"

My head swam with pain and the horror of Antrobus's demoniacal rage. Another second and he would batter me into unconsciousness.

The rage passed as suddenly as it had come, and he fell back exhausted.

A look of deadly hatred settled on his face. Once more he was the cobra-like Antrobus, poised and

ready to strike. He peered short-sightedly from me to Celia and back to Jackson. Suddenly he laughed; the devilish, barking laugh which had always scared poor Jerry. I felt the hair rise along my scalp. He walked over to Celia.

"So!" he said. "No wonder you wanted me to be merciful to this tramp." His voice rose menacingly. "You knew who he was, you lying slut."

He got no further, for Celia leapt up suddenly and smacked his face with a blow that would have done credit to a skilled boxer. I shouted with rage as the Nubian struck her down. Antrobus recovered himself and smiled evilly.

"Ha!" he ejaculated. "You show a commendable spirit, my pretty one. But wait a little, wait a little." He turned swiftly on the negro. "Bind her," he ordered. So Celia was very soon in the same plight as ourselves. Our only hope now was that Sir Arnold Withers' men would arrive before Antrobus could exact his revenge. I glanced at a grandfather clock in the corner. It needed a quarter to twelve. It was a bitter pill for me to swallow. Success had been so near. Antrobus regarded me with amusement.

"I see, Colonel Warren," he jeered. "You have succumbed to the charms of the leading lady. The gallant swain attempted a rescue, eh?"

He stood right over me.

"I will admit," he cooed, "I did not know of your proximity. I did not know you were alive even. But I knew the Lady Celia wished to take a walk. I therefore went around to the back of the house

and came on the spot just in time to prevent her stepping through the window. Most considerate of me, was it not? But, of course, you are prejudiced."

He turned again to the negro and handed him a revolver.

"Guard them," he commanded. With that he left the library. The clock in the corner ticked with maddening slowness. Celia's eyes met mine bravely.

"Sorry, Bill," she said.

Poor Jackson groaned aloud. I knew that this was not on his own account. The look on Celia's face had struck him hard.

I smiled back at her as well as my battered face would allow me.

"It is for me to apologise, my dear," I said. "I can never forgive myself."

Jackson cursed. "But I got one of the swine," he said.

A wild hope leapt into my head, for I realised that the heavy boot I had seen behind the door had not belonged to Jerry. I almost shouted for joy. Whilst Jerry was alive there was always a chance. The door opened, and Antrobus entered bearing in his hand a small glass filled with an emerald green fluid. He was smiling all over his face like a Cheshire cat. It was horrible. He walked over towards Celia and a terrible fear clutched my heart. My throat was dry and my tongue felt like wood. But deep down inside me there came a slow cold deadly rage, and a tiny pulse began to beat on the side of my jaw. I strained might and main to burst my bonds.

Antrobus took the revolver from the negro. "I want that," he said. "There is another on the chest in the hall. Take it and go outside and see if you can find any more of these spies knocking around. Shoot on sight."

The negro flashed white teeth and rolled his eyes cruelly on me.

"You kill that one, baas? Make sure you kill that one, baas. Him know too much. Kill quick!"

He moistened his finger and drew it across his throat.

"Razor," he chuckled.

"Go out," ordered Antrobus. "I'll see to this!"

The negro went out with a final malevolent glance over his shoulder at me.

Antrobus put down the glass and the revolver and drew a hypodermic syringe from his jacket pocket.

"I will explain for your benefit, Lady Celia," he said icily, "exactly what is going to take place. The Colonel," he laughed unnaturally, "the Colonel who knows something of the methods employed by Central African witch-doctors will bear me out." He turned his baleful glasses on me and smiled. You know what happens, my dear Colonel, if I dip a thorn in this liquid and prick you with it?"

I moistened dry lips. I knew only too well.

"I propose to inject a little of this into your delicate wrist, Lady Celia," he continued. "It is a very powerful drug, as Colonel Warren can tell you. It has hypnotic effects. As soon as you are innoculated, you will be able to obey no will but mine. I shall

cut your bonds, hand you this revolver and will with all my strength that you shoot those interfering gentlemen who are so honouring me with their presence."

For a second or two there was silence, then came a whisper from Celia. "Is—is that true, Bill?"

I closed me eyes as I told her the lie.

"No, my dear, he's bluffing."

Antrobus laughed his terrible barking laugh, and I almost fainted as I recollected the death of El Draco in Bat's Wood. I knew it was only too terribly true. Jackson was whispering hoarsely at my side.

"That's not true, sir, is it? He can't make her ladyship do that, can he? For God's sake, sir, tell me that's not true."

I knew full well that poor Jackson's alarm was not on his own account. We had been in so many tight places before now that I knew it was not cowardice.

Antrobus had filled the needle, and had crossed over to Celia. A cunning look swept over his face.

"Ha!" he ejaculated. "I notice, Colonel Warren, that you glance at the clock. Is it possible you are expecting someone at—say—midnight?"

The last word was expelled with the force of a bullet. I glanced at him, but saw that he was not looking at me. He had his glasses turned towards Jackson.

"Oh!" he continued softly. "So that's the game, is it? You should really train your servants better, Colonel Warren. Your butler shows so clearly how disappointed he is. Oh, I know full well that everything about me is known to that doddering old fool

Sir Arnold Withers. The very fact of your being alive tells me that. And you would not trust yourself here without a posse at your back. But I have a safe exit, thank you, and you will observe it requires five minutes to the witching hour."

He laughed again, that devilish barking laugh, and I sat as if stunned.

"A lot can happen in five minutes, Colonel." His lips drew back in a wolfish snarl.

"You devil," I yelled. "You cowardly, murdering devil."

He laughed in my face.

"I am so sorry to disappoint you, mon Colonel. Your friends will find the hawk flown. And as for you!" his voice shook with rage. "I've made two mistakes. I shall not make a third."

He held the syringe up to the light and examined it critically. Then he turned to Celia. At that very second a shot rang out and someone shouted hoarsely outside. Alarmed, Antrobus straightened up. Next instant there came a crash of glass. A huge form leapt like a panther right across the room and landed on Antrobus's back. It was Jerry Scant. Both went down in a heap, and the syringe, describing an arc, fell with a tinkle on the arm of my chair.

Events then happened in such swift succession that I could scarcely follow them. The door burst open and the Nubian rushed in.

"Fly, baas," he thundered. "The police——" Then he stopped as he saw Jerry and Antrobus rolling together on the floor. He leapt forward, but from

that struggling heap of arms and legs there came a deafening crash and a vivid stab of flame. The negro opened his lips in a fiendish grin, sagged at the knees and went down on his back. I knew he was out for good. Then I saw Antrobus struggle to his feet and dash for the door. Again came that deafening crash, but this time too late. Antrobus had disappeared. Like some great baffled hound, Jerry flung himself after him, and I caught myself laughing hysterically.

A cool looking man in dark clothes stepped through the broken window and peered through the haze of smoke. Catching sight of Celia, he hurried forward. For the first time, in her life (so she told me afterwards) she had fainted.

CHAPTER XVI

"IN WHICH THE FOX IS BOLTED"

It was a splendid round up. But we had to swallow one very bitter pill. Antrobus had got away.

Jerry was almost in tears.

"I couldn't shoot him from outside the window, pard," he said. "He was in dead line with the lady. So I came in for him, but that nigger put me off. I had to settle his hash quick, otherwise he would have got me. That's when Antrobus slipped away."

Sir Arnold Withers bustled in full of good spirits.

"Congratulations, Warren," he said. "Marvellous work. Got every bird, except the eagle. But we will bring him down soon, I feel sure."

His optimism cheered me. Although, as he said, we had made a splendid haul, the disappointment at losing the chief one through the mesh was bitter. But Withers would not be depressed.

"Never had anything like it," he said. "My men who have searched the harness room discovered some cellars. The place is stacked with goods. It is almost unbelievable. They have got the motor boats, too. Each packet, by the way, is covered in oiled silk that has been treated with luminous paint. Gee! I should like to have seen that change over out in

the Channel. Smart work, Warren, but you were smarter, my boy."

"But Antrobus," I began.

"Is on foot somewhere in this country," said Sir Arnold. "I have seen your prize-helpers, the Jonathans. They have gone back to their farm for the hound. The old boy with the ginger whiskers swears that it would follow a fox through a river."

"Ye gods!" I gasped. "There's a chance, then?"

"Chance," laughed Sir Arnold, "it's a certainty, according to your dour friend Jonathan."

I handed Celia over to the fatherly care of Sir Arnold. I never realised until then the resolute sense of duty with which she was imbued. It is no wonder that she had been rapidly making a name for herself as an actress.

"I am all right, Bill," she replied to my nineteenth inquiry. "You go and finish your job."

"Are you coming along, sir?" asked Jerry.

I looked at him and laughed. "You bet," I replied.

The last glimpse I had of Celia as I went out was of her standing firm and straight by Sir Arnold's side. Her dark eyes sought mine and her lips moved stiffly.

"Good luck, old boy," she said.

Outside Jerry chuckled. "That's what I calls a lady," he said. "A real pukka lady. By damn! I'd let her walk her pretty little feet all over me if she chose."

The Jonathans were on hand with their massive hound. As I looked at its great slavering jaws, I

almost felt a pity for the man we were to hunt down. But when I recollected what a monster he was, the feeling vanished. The elder Jonathan coughed harshly and his small eyes gleamed redly in the light.

"We will find him for you, Colonel. Nothing gets away from Raker." His lips parted in a grim smile, and his brother flashed his white teeth in agreement.

"Yes, yes, indeed," he said. "David is not exaggerating. Raker will track him if he walks through water."

So started the strangest hunt I had ever undertaken. Twelve of us set out, including Jerry, Jackson, the Jonathans and myself. As we passed up the drive I was struck with a peculiar thought. Fox Pit House was the name of the place. A fox was being hunted out of it. What if he should go to ground?

Up above the sinister dripping well we struck into the woods. Right up through these we passed, over the fern-covered boundary wall and into the fields on the other side of the road.

The hound strained forward with never a falter. Above us shone a white moon, whose light, striking hedges and stunted trees, threw strong dark shadows on the ground. We were a silent band. There was something grim and relentless about our progress. For two miles or so the course wove aimlessly through small fields. Jerry came up alongside.

"It may be a quick find, sir," he said between his teeth. "Looks as if he has lost his way. If only we can come up to him before he finds what he wants."

His voice trailed away. I wondered what he meant.

Another five minutes of aimless but hard going then the line straightened out. One of Sir Arnold's men spoke.

"The old fox is heading for the sea."

Jerry gave him a quick look of approval.

"I hope we come up with him, sir, before he finds what I think he's after, otherwise——"

The unfinished sentence filled me with disquiet. I had set so much on capturing Antrobus. He had been at liberty far too long. He was too great a force for evil to be allowed to evade capture.

One or two of the hunt now began to show signs of distress, especially Sir Arnold Withers' men. They were not used to this sort of thing.

"Damn!"

Jerry swore roundly.

The trail had hit a little grass-covered lane running between two gorse-lined banks.

"What's the trouble, Jerry?" I asked.

Jerry turned a glum face to me.

"That devil Antrobus knows more than is good for him," he replied.

"I know," I said testily, "but what exactly is the trouble?"

"He has struck one of the old Flemings' roads. There's few people know of them, only antiquaries and such like. One of 'em goes right over the mountains. That's a main one. This one goes to the sea. It is fast going now; and the devil has had a long start."

I had heard of the old roads of which Jerry had spoken, but I did not know they could still be traced. During the wars between the English and the Welsh a colony of Flemings had been planted in the south of the county. Their stronghold was the ancient town of Harford, and they had an outpost in Kilgerran in the North. Their old military road, via Flandrica, ran across the Prescilly Hills. But we were now on a subsidiary road, one of the lesser known ones around the coast.

The chase now became a cracking one. The hound seemed to realise that the weavings had quite definitely ceased, and that from now on the going was straight.

"Jerry," I gasped. "They will never stand this pace. It may be all right for you and me, but Sir Arnold Withers' men will never stick it. They are townsmen."

Jerry scowled, and his upper lip rose over his teeth.

"I don't care a damn if you all drop out. I'm going to get Antrobus, dead or alive."

I knew that it was useless to attempt to persuade him to set a slower pace. Jerry had one of his obstinate moods, and the arguments of a circuit judge would not have moved him.

But we were now badly strung out, and glancing around I saw man after man drop exhausted.

On the next stop Jackson went out. His eyes fixed themselves on mine like a dog's. Poor old Jackson! He had stuck it till he dropped like a log. I felt the strain pretty badly myself, but the hard going of the past fortnight had left me as hard as

nails. I was in perfect training. But the pace was killing us—all.

Then out went the younger Jonathan. He started to reel just like a drunken man, then pitched suddenly against the hillside, absolutely whacked. I glanced at the older Jonathan, who was ploughing along at my side, and I marvelled. He was obviously in distress, for his face was deathly white and his breath came hoarsely, pantingly. Yet there was such a grim look of determination on his face that I had a feeling that he would be in at the death. He caught my eye, but did not speak. I think he was past it.

As for that iron man, Jerry Scant, his great legs swung under him as regularly as piston rods; his breathing was deep and easy; his eye bright and unclouded, and his voice steady. His jaw was set as solidly grim as one of the chunks of granite on Carn Ingli. I felt a thrill go through me. This grim man and the great red-jawed slavering hound would run Antrobus to the crack of doom. And if sheer stark hate and iron determination had a say in the matter I felt that the old Red Jonathan would be a close third. His pale eyes kept lighting on the hound as if giving him encouragement, and occasionally the hound would turn up his bloodshot eyes as if apologising for the delay. The old red master spoke no word, but the hound knew.

"The sea—not far," I gasped.

Jerry's lips were grim, and his voice shook with anger.

"I guess not, pard. That Antrobus is a devil. He is going to take some finding."

Some of my strength seemed to ooze out of me and I lagged behind.

"Damn the long-legged rogue," I muttered.

And so up over the barren headland, where the cool winds blew in from the sea. Antrobus had completed, or almost completed a half circle. Starting off as if heading for the hills, he swept around to the right, and looked to be striking the coast a little to the north of St. David's Headland. But I could not understand why he had taken this direction. Here the cliffs were high, and there were few paths down to the sea. But I did not take into account how closely he had been pressed.

The moon flooded the open country. There was no one else in sight. The finale was left to the three of us, myself, Jerry, and the Red Jonathan. The hound suddenly gave tongue, in a choking, unearthly bay. The dim arch of the sky seemed to snatch it out of his throat and muffle it in its shadowy immensity. There was no echo. Jerry's yes gleamed.

"We are close up, pard," he warned. "Get out your iron."

As he spoke there came a sharp report, and a bullet droned past my ear.

"Down!" shouted Jerry.

He fired as he dropped, and I saw a shadowy form rise out of the ground and melt away in the uncertain light.

"Easy now, pard," counselled Jerry. "It's you he is after first. I'm banking on that."

Jonathan lay gasping beside us. His physical distress was pitiful. He had put up a magnificent performance. Four miles of hard going across country is a severe test for a man nearer fifty than forty. But he was a hard and dour old man, and accustomed to an active life.

The hound strained on the leash, eager to go in and finish it, but Jerry restrained him and lay listening intently. Presently he arose.

"Righto, pard! All clear for fifty yards anyway. Move quickly and flop down on the slightest sign."

So we advanced swiftly, spread out fan-wise, and at a sign from Jerry dropped down again. A clump of gorse bushes lay in our path on a broken rough patch covered with wild scabious and bell heather.

Jerry considered this barrier for a moment, then he spoke quietly,

"When I give the word fire into that clump, and shake the old gun a little. We might catch him with a lucky one. Now!"

A crackle of pistol fire ripped out, but although we did not wound our quarry we started him, for once again I saw that tall shadowy form. It moved with incredible swiftness, or else the light was deceptive.

Jerry rapped out an oath.

"By damn! The man moves like a will-o'-the-wisp."

Once more we advanced cautiously, and in my bones I felt that the issue was now to be decided. Jerry began to chuckle grimly.

"We've got him, pard! We've driven him up on the Falcon's Shelf. There's no way down except over us."

"Can he get down the cliff?" I asked.

Jerry laughed shortly.

"Yes. If he can grow wings," he said.

Cautiously we arose and moved forward. I saw what Jerry meant when he said our quarry was trapped. The spur we were on climbed up to the cliff edge in a long gradual slope. Through the dim light I saw on my right what looked to be a deep pit.

"Keep away from the edge, sir," warned Jerry. "That's the "Huntsman's Leap."

I then realised that the pit was in reality a deep chasm running in from the sea. Far beneath me I heard the sullen moan of the waves.

"There's another gap on the left, pard," explained Jerry. "So you see we have got him at last."

But we had not yet got him, and a spiteful bullet zipping between us warned us that there is many a slip twixt cup and lip.

Down we dropped, but on attempting to rise again we were met by a couple of swift shots.

"Damn the swine!" swore Jerry. "He is behind that little fold in the ground."

I edged closer.

"Jerry," I whispered thickly, "Loose the hound. We must get him now."

Jerry thought for a minute.

"Right, pard," he said.

He fumbled a moment at the dog's straining neck. I saw the hound shoot forward as if propelled from a catapult. I saw Jerry and Red Jonathan rise up, and sprang up myself.

Crack!—Crack!

I was scarcely aware of my feet touching the ground.

Crack!

As in a nightmare I saw the leaping body of the hound, and the long, lanky form of Antrobus sprawled on a shadowy slope. Behind him the knife edge of the cliff cut the violet sky. I saw Antrobus rise to his knees, and realised he was facing me. His arm come up and I swerved away. But the devil withheld his fire, and I knew that, callous of what happened to himself, he was going to get me.

Then a huge body blocked out my view, and at the same moment Antrobus fired.

Crack!

The body in front of me spun around and I glimpsed Jerry's face twisted and surprised. He had been hit. I had seen too many not to recognise that hurt, surprised look.

"Get him, pard," he muttered, and he fired as he dropped.

Red Jonathan was crawling painfully on his hands and knees towards the grim drama now being fought out at the cliff edge.

Inextricably mixed, and rolling about on the very edge of the cliff were Antrobus and the hound. A

dreadful snarling, worrying noise arose. Scream after scream rent the air, and suddenly that struggling heap disappeared. From out of the depths came a cry faint as a sea bird's.

"Great God!" I whispered. "Great God!" And suddenly my legs felt very weak and I sat down.

Far below the waves rolled in over the great boulders, and their hissing murmur came faintly to my ear. My skin tingled and became cold, and a sweat started out on my forehead.

For a little while I sat with my head between my hands. Then, with an effort, I raised myself and looked around. Red Jonathan had crawled right to the edge of the cliff, and his lips were trembling beneath the coarse red whisker.

"Raker!" he cried. "Raker!"

Just those two cries, that was all, but the pathos in them smote my heart.

With a feeling of dread I looked around for Jerry, that laughing, brown-eyed, merry rogue. He was lying still on the close turf, and my heart missed a beat.

Going over to him I gently turned him over, and as I did so he opened his eyes.

"Jerry, old pard," I murmured.

"What?" he asked, and sat suddenly up and began feeling himself.

His face twisted in pain, and again I became alarmed.

"Through the shoulder, pard," he said. "Bet 'e's broken my collar bone. Ten to one 'e's busted my

collar bone. Damn! Hundred to one e's busted my collar——. Where is he, pard?"

"Over the cliff," I replied.

"Good! That's where that sod belongs. I could laugh till I busted my other collar bone, pard."

I found that when Jerry had fallen he had struck his head on a stone embedded in the turf, and that apart from a fleshy wound in the shoulder, and a nasty bruise on the forehead, he was uninjured. I bandaged the shoulder with strips of torn clothing, and then that case-hardened old reprobate brought out his flask.

"'Tis the only thing to pull old Red Whiskers around," he chuckled. "A drop of smuggled spirit will be like elixir. Just you watch."

He went over and held the bottle to Jonathan's lips, and that worthy was not long in seizing it himself, it was a quick recovery.

There remains little to be told of interest to the reader.

We had smashed the gang, and its leader was dead. Sir Arnold Withers was more pleased over this job than I remember seeing him over anything else. He showed his gratitude in a handsome way, for not long after I was offered a rather unique post in the Service, which I accepted. There is some talk of a knighthood, for what certain of the powers that be term "distinguished service during and after the war."

But what concerns me more than anything else at the moment is what dress Jerry Scant will wear

as my "best man" at the wedding, for Celia insists on my having him. He is a peculiar sort of man. He flatly refused all offers of a job, and it was a long time before he could be persuaded to accept any reward. He did so at last reluctantly, and I found out that he spent nearly all of it for the benefit of the kiddies throughout the county, a lot of it finding its way to a hospital not hard to find.

"What can I do with a job, sir?" he asked. He swept his hand around with the old familiar gesture, embracing the sea, the blue sky, and the mountains. "This is my life, sir. Can I leave these little scorched fields now? Or the little clear streams, with their red-spotted trout? And—Hark! By God, did ye hear that old cock-pheasant? I'll salt his long tail when October comes. Pity ye can't stay till then, pard. I would roast 'un wonderful!"

His brown, dog-like eyes searched mine steadily. His mighty hand clasped mine.

"You know more about me than most, pard. Good-bye."

THE END

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